

SERMONS

PREACHED Upon

Several OCCASIONS.

By *ROBERT SOUTH*, D. D.

V O L. IV.

Containing the following SUBJECTS, *viz.*

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| I. The Scribe instructed, &c. | Blessed Trinity asserted. |
| II. Prosperity ever dangerous to Virtue. | VIII. and IX. Ill-disposed Affections the Cause of Error in the Judgment. |
| III. Shamefulness in Sin, the certain Forerunner of Destruction. | X. and XI. Coverousness proved no less an Absurdity in Reason, than a Contradiction to Religion, nor a more unsure Way of Riches, than Riches themselves to Happiness. |
| IV. Concealment of Sin no Security to the Sinner. | XII. Heaven the surest Treasure. |
| V. The Recompence of the Reward. | |
| VI. On the General Resurrection. | |
| VII. The Doctrine of the | |



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SERMONS

Chief H. A. D. S.

SERMONS IN VOL. IV



T H E
Chief H E A D S
O F T H E
SERMONS *in* VOL. IV.

S E R M O N I.

MATTH. xiii. 52. *Then said he unto them; therefore every Scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a Man that is an Householder, which bringeth forth out of his Treasure Things new and old.*

Page 1.

Christ here gives the Character of a Preacher or Evangelist *p. 1 to 3*, in these Words; where we are to consider

1st, What is meant by the Scribe among the Jews, either as a civil or a Church-Officer,

p. 3 to 6.

2dly, What it is to be instructed for the Kingdom of Heaven,

p. 6, 7.

3dly, What it is to bring out of one's Treasure Things new and old,

p. 8 to 11.

And then by applying all this to the Minister of the Gospel, we are to examine

1st, His Qualifications

p. 12. viz.

A 2

I. A

1. A natural Ability of the Faculties of his Mind, *p.* 12, 13. Judgment, *p.* 13. Memory, *p.* 14. Invention, *p.* 15, 16.

2. An habitual Preparation by Study, *p.* 18 to 20, in Point of Learning and Knowledge, *p.* 20 to 25, of significant Speech and Expression, *p.* 25 to *p.* 29.

2dly, The Reason of their Necessity, *p.* 29, viz.

1. Because the Preacher's Work is to persuade, *p.* 30 to 36.

2. Because God himself was at the Expence of a Miracle to endow the first Preachers with them, *p.* 36 to 38.

3. Because the Dignity of the Subject, which is Divinity, requires them, *p.* 38, 39.

3dly, The Inferences from these Particulars, *p.* 39, viz.

1. A Reproof to such as discredit the Ordinance of Preaching *p.* 51, 51, and the Church itself, *p.* 51, 52, either by light and comical, *p.* 40, 41, or by dull and heavy Discourses, *p.* 42 to 50.

2. An Exhortation to such, who design themselves for the Ministry, to bestow a competent Time in preparing for it, *p.* 53 to 58.

S E R M O N II.

PROV. i. 32. *The Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them.* *p.* 61.

The Misery of all foolish or vicious Persons is, that Prosperity itself to them becomes destructive, *p.* 61 to 63. Because

1st, They

1st, They are ignorant or regardless of the Ends, wherefore God sends it, *p.* 63, viz.

1. To try and discover what is in a Man, *p.* 63 to 66.
2. To encourage him in Gratitude to his Maker, *p.* 66, 67.
3. To make him helpful to Society, *p.* 67 to 69.

2^{dly}, Prosperity is prone

1. To abate Men's Virtues, *p.* 69 to 73.
2. To heighten their Corruptions, *p.* 75, 76. such as Pride, *p.* 76, 77. Luxury and Unclean-ness, *p.* 77, 78. Prophaneness, *p.* 79 to 81.

3^{dly}, It indisposes Men to the Means of their Amendment, *p.* 81, rendring them

1. Averse to all Counsel, *p.* 81, 82.
2. Unfit for the sharp Trials of Adversity, under which they either despond, or blaspheme, *p.* 82 to 84.

Therefore, that Prosperity may not be destructive, a Man ought

1. To consider the Uncertainty of it, *p.* 84, 85. And
2. How little he is bettered by it, *p.* 85, 86.
3. To use the severe Duties of Mortification, *p.* 86, 87.

S E R M O N III.

JEREM. vi. 15. *Were they ashamed, when they had committed Abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall;*

at the Time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Page 91.

Shamefulness in Sin is the certain Forerunner of Destruction, *p. 91 to 93.* in the Prosecution of which Proposition we may observe

1st. What Shame is *p. 94 to 98,* and how it is more effectual than Law in its Influence upon Men, with Respect to the Evil threatned by it, and to the Extent of that Evil, *p. 99 to 103.*

2^{dly}, How Men cast off that Shame, *p. 103.*

1. By the Commission of great Sins, *p. 104 to 106.*

2. By a Custom of finning, *p. 106, 107.*

3. By the Examples of great Persons, *p. 107 to 109.*

4. By the Observation of the general Practice, *p. 109 to 111.*

5. By having been once irrecoverably ashamed, *p. 111, 112.*

3^{dly}, The several Degrees of Shamefulness in Sin, *p. 112.*

1. To shew Respect to sinful Persons, *p. 112 to 114.*

2. To defend Sin, *p. 114 to 116.*

3. To glory in it, *p. 116 to 118.*

4^{thly}, The Reasons, why Shamefulness is so destructive, *p. 118.*

1. Because it presupposes those Actions, which God seldom lets go unpunished, *p. 118, and*

2. It has a destructive Influence upon the Government of the World, *p. 119 to 122.*

5^{thly},

5thly, The Judgments, by which it procures the Sinner's Ruin, *p.* 122. A sudden and disastrous Death, *p.* 122. War and Desolation, *ibid.* Captivity, *p.* 124.

Lastly, An Application is made of the whole, *p.* 125 to 128.

S E R M O N IV.

NUMB. xxxii. 23. latter Part of the Verse.

— *Be sure your Sin will find you out.* *p.* 131.

These Words reach the Case of all Sinners,

p. 131, 132.

1st, Sin upon a Confidence of Concealment, *p.* 133. For

1. No Man engages in Sin, but as it bears some Appearance of Good, *p.* 133, 134.

2. Shame and Pain are by God made the Consequents of Sin, *p.* 134 to 139.

2dly, Take up that Confidence, *p.* 139. upon

1. Their own Success, *p.* 139 to 144.

2. The Success of others, *p.* 144, 145.

3. An Opinion of their own Cunning, *p.* 145 to 148.

4. The Hope of Repentance, *p.* 148 to 151.

3dly, Are at last certainly defeated, *p.* 151.

Because

1. The very Confidence of Secrecy is the Cause of the Sinner's Discovery, *p.* 151,

152.

2. There is sometimes a providential Con-

currence of unlikely Accidents for a Discovery, *p. 152 to 155.*

3. One Sin sometimes is the Means of discovering another, *p. 155 to 157.*

4. The Sinner may discover himself through Frenzy and Distraction, *p. 157, 158,* or be forced to it

5. By his own Conscience, *p. 158 to 160.*

6. He may be suddenly struck by some notable Judgment, *p. 160 to 163, or*

Lastly, His Guilt will follow him into another World, if he should chance to escape in this, *p. 163 to 165.*

S E R M O N V.

HEB. xi. 24, 25, 26. *By Faith, Moses, when he came to Years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter : Choosing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season : Esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches, than all the Treasures of Egypt. For he had Respect unto the Recompence of Reward.* *p. 169.*

A Christian is not bound to sequester his Mind from Respect to an ensuing Reward, *p. 169 to 172.* For

1st, Duty considered barely as Duty is not sufficient to engage Man's Will, *p. 174.* Because

1. The Soul has originally an Averseness to Duty, *p. 174 to 177.*

2. The

2. The Affections of the Soul are not at all gratified by any Thing in Duty, *p.* 177 to 184.

3. If Duty of itself was a sufficient Motive, then Hope and Fear would be needless, *p.* 184 to 193.

With an Answer to some Objections, *p.* 193 to 201.

2dly, A Reward and a Respect to it are necessary to engage Man's Obedience, *p.* 201 to 203, not absolutely, but with Respect to Man's present Condition, *p.* 203, 204. The Proof whereof may be drawn from Scripture, and the Practice of all Lawgivers, *p.* 204 to 208.

Therefore it is every Man's infinite Concern to fix to himself a Principle to act by, which may bring him to his beatifick End, *p.* 208 to 211.

S E R M O N VI.

ACTS xxiv. 15. *Having Hope towards God, (which they themselves also allow) that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the Just and Unjust.* *p.* 215.

It is certain, that there must be a general Retribution, and, by Consequence, a general Resurrection, *p.* 215 to 218.

The Belief of which, though

1st. It is exceeding difficult, *p.* 218, because

1. Natural Reason is averse to it, *p.* 220 to 223.

2. This

2. This Averseness is grounded partly upon many Improbabilities, *p.* 223, 224. partly upon downright Impossibilities charged upon it, *p.* 226 to 229. Yet

2dly, Is founded upon sufficient and solid Grounds, *p.* 229, which will appear

1. By answering the Objections of Improbability and Impossibility, *p.* 230 to 241.

2. By positive Arguments, *p.* 241 to 251.

3dly, Gaineth much Worth and Excellency from all those Difficulties, *p.* 251. For from hence,

1. We collect the utter Insufficiency of bare Natural Religion, *p.* 252 to 257.

2. We infer the Impiety of *Socinian* Opinions concerning the Resurrection, *p.* 257 to 262.

S E R M O N VII.

COL. ii. 2. — *To the Acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* *p.* 268.

These Words examined and explained prove the Plurality of Persons in the Divine Nature a great Mystery, to be acknowledged by all Christians, *p.* 265 to 270. which will appear by shewing.

1st, What Conditions are required to denominate a Thing a Mystery, *p.* 270, viz.

1. That it be really true, and not contrary to Reason, *p.* 271.

2. That

2. That it be above the Reach of mere Reason to find it out, before it be revealed, *p. 271.*

3. That, being revealed, it be yet very difficult for, if not above finite Reason fully to comprehend it, *ibid.*

2dly, That all these Conditions meet in the Article of the Trinity, *p. 271 to 290.*

With an Account of the blasphemous Expressions and Assertions of the *Socinians*, *p. 290 to 297.*

Lastly, Since this Article is of so great Moment, it is fit to examine

1. The Causes, which have unsettled and destroyed the Belief of it, *p. 297.* Such as representing it in a Figure, *p. 298, 299,* expressing it by bold and insignificant Terms, *p. 300,* building it on Texts of Scripture, which will evince no such Thing, *p. ibid.*

2. The Means how to fix and continue it in the Mind, *p. 301,* by acquiescing in Revelation, *ibid.* and suppressing all over-curious Enquiries into the Nature of it, *p. 301 to 303.*

S E R M. VIII. and IX.

2 THESS. ii. 11. *And for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lye.* *p. 307.*

A very

A very severe Judgment is here denounced against them, who receive not the Love of the Truth, *p.* 307 to 312. which will be best understood by shewing

1st, How the Mind of Man can believe a Lye, *p.* 312 to 314, either

1. Through the Remoteness of the Faculty from its Object, *p.* 315. or

2. Through some Weakness or Disorder in it, *p.* 316, 317.

2^{dly}, What it is to receive the Love of Truth, *p.* 317, viz. to esteem, *ibid.* to 322, and to choose it, *p.* 322 to 324. And consequently, what it is, not to receive it, *p.* 324 to 328.

3^{dly}, How the not receiving the Love of Truth into the Will disposes the Understanding to Delusion, *p.* 328.

1. By drawing the Understanding from fixing its Contemplation upon Truth, *p.* 328 to 330.

2. By prejudicing it against it, *p.* 330 to 332.

3. By darkning the Mind, which is the peculiar Malignity of every Vice, *p.* 332 to 335.

4^{thly}, How God can properly be said to send Men Delusions, *p.* 335, 336.

1. By withdrawing his enlightning Influence from the Understanding, *p.* 337 to 341.

2. By commissioning the Spirit of Falshood to seduce the Sinner, *p.* 341 to 343.

3. By providential disposing of Men into such Circumstances of Life, as have an Efficacy to delude, *p.* 344 to 347.

4. By

4. By his Permission of lying Wonders, *p.*
 347 to 350.
 5thly, Wherein the Greatness of this Delu-
 sion consists, *p.* 355.

1. In itself; as it is Spiritual, and directly
 annoys a Man's Soul, *p.* 355 to 360, and
 more particularly blasts his Understand-
 ing, *p.* 360 to 366.
2. In its Consequences, *p.* 366, as it renders
 the Conscience useless, *ibid.* to 369,
 and ends in a total Destruction *p.* 369 to
 371.

6thly, What Deductions may be made from
 the whole, *p.* 371.

1. That 'tis not inconsistent with God's Ho-
 lineſs to puniſh one Sin with another,
ibid. to 378.
2. That the beſt Way to confirm our Faith
 about the Truths of Religion is to love
 and acknowledge them, *ibid.* to 383.
3. That hereby we may be able to find out
 the true Cauſe of Atheiſm, *p.* 383 to 386,
 and Fanaticiſm, *ibid.* to 389.

SERM. X. and XI.

LUKE xii. 15. *And he ſaid unto them, take
 heed, and beware of Covetouſneſs; for a Man's
 Life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the Things
 which he poſſeſſeth.* *p.* 393.

It is natural for Man to aim at Happineſs,
 the Way to which ſeems to be an abundance of
 this

this World's good Things, and Covetousness is supposed the Means to acquire it. But our Saviour confutes this in these Words, *p. 393 to 395*, which contains

1st, A Dehortation, *p. 396*, wherein we may observe

1. The Author of it, Christ himself, *p. 398 to 400*, the Lord of the Universe, *p. 400*, depressed to the lowest Estate of Poverty, *p. 400, 401.*
 2. The Thing we are dehorted from, Covetousness, *p. 401*, by which is not meant a prudent Forecast and Patrimony, *p. 402 to 404*, but an anxious Care about worldly Things, attended with a Distrust of Providence, *p. 404 to 407*, a Rapacity in getting, *p. 407 to 411*, by all illegal Ways, *p. 411 to 414*, a Tenaciousness in keeping, *p. 414 to 418.*
 3. The Way how we are dehorted from it; Take heed and beware, *p. 418*. For 'tis very apt to prevail upon us, by its near Resemblance to Virtue, *p. 419 to 421*, the Plausibility of its Pleas, *p. 421 to 425*, the Reputation it generally gives in the World, *p. 425 to 427*. And there is a great Difficulty in removing it, *p. 427 to 432.*
- 2^{dly}, The Reason of that Dehortation, *p. 395, 435*, that a Man's Life consisteth not in the abundance of the Things, which he possesseth, *p. 435 to 437*. Because

1. In

1. In the getting of them Men are put upon the greatest Toils and Labours, *p. 438 to 441*, run the greatest Dangers, *p. 441 to 446*, commit the greatest Sins, *p. 446 to 448*. And
 2. When they are gotten, are attended with excessive Cares, *p. 448 to 452*, with an insatiable Desire of getting more, *p. 452 to 455*, are exposed to many Temptations, *p. 455 to 458*, to the Malice and Envy of all about them, *p. 458, 459*.
 3. The Possession of earthly Riches is not able to remove those Things, which chiefly render Men miserable, *p. 460*, such as affect his Mind, *p. 460 to 462*, or his Body, *p. 462 to 465*.
 4. The greatest Happiness this Life is capable of, may be enjoyed without that Abundance, *p. 465 to 473*.
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S E R M O N XII.

MATT. vi. 21. *For where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.* *p. 477.*

These Words concerning Man's Heart's being fixed upon his Treasure or chief Good, *p. 477 to 379*, may be considered

1st, As an entire Proposition in themselves, *p. 479.*

1. Supposing, that every Man has something which he accounts his Treasure, *ibid.* which appears from the Activity of his Mind,

Mind, *p. 480 to 482*, and the Method of his acting, *p. 483.*

2. Declaring, that every Man places his whole Heart upon that Treasure, *p. 484*, by a restless Endeavour to acquire it, *p. 485 to 488*, by a continual Delight in it, *p. 488 to 490*, by supporting himself with it in all his Troubles, *p. 490 to 492*, by a Willingness to part with all other Things to preserve it, *p. 492 to 494.*

2dly, As they enforce the foregoing Precept in the 19th and 20th Verses; wherein the Things on Earth, and the Things in Heaven, are represented as Rivals for Men's Afflictions, *p. 495 to 498*, and that the last ought to claim them in Preference to the other, will be proved

1. By considering the World, how vastly inferior it is to the Worth of Man's Heart, *p. 498 to 502.*

2. By considering the World in itself, *p. 502*, how all its Enjoyments are perishing, *p. 502 to 504*, and out of our Power, *p. 504 to 507*. And on the contrary, Heaven is the Exchange God gives for Man's Heart, *p. 500*, and the Enjoyments above are indefectible, endless, *p. 504*, and not to be taken away, *p. 506.*

The Improvement of these Particulars is to convince us of the extreme Vanity of most Men's Pretences to Religion, *p. 507 to 511.*

SERMON I.

The Scribe instructed, &c.

St. MATTH. xiii. 52.

Then said he unto them, therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an housholder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.

IN this chapter we have a large discourse from the great preacher of righteousness; A discourse fraught with all the commending excellencies of speech; delightful for its variety, admirable for its convincing quickness, and argumentative closeness, and (which is seldom an excellency in other sermons) *excellent for its length.*

2 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. 1.

For that, which is carried on with a continued unflagging vigour of expression, can never be thought tedious, nor consequently long. And Christ, who was not only the *Preacher*, but himself also the *Word*, was undoubtedly furnished with a strain of heavenly oratory far above the heights of all human rhetoric whatsoever: His sermons being of that grace and ornament, that (as the world generally goes) they might have prevailed even without *truth*, and yet pregnant with such irresistible *truth*, that the ornament might have been spared; and indeed it still seems to have been used, rather to *gratify*, than *persuade* the hearer. So that we may (only with a reverential acknowledgment both of the difference of the persons, and of the subject) give that testimony of Christ's sermons, which *Cicero* (the great master of the *Roman* eloquence) did of *Demosthenes's* orations, who being asked, which of them was the best, answered the *longest*.

Accordingly, our Saviour having in the verse here pitched upon for my text, finished his foregoing discourse, he now closes up all with the character of a *Preacher*, or *Evangelist*; still addressing himself to his disciples, as to a designed seminary of preachers; or rather indeed, as to a kind of little itinerant academy (if I may

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 3

may so call it) of such as were to take his heavenly doctrines for the sole rule of their practice; and his excellent way of preaching, for the standing pattern of their imitation; thus lying at the feet of their Blessed Lord, with the humblest attention of scholars, and the lowest prostration of subjects. The very *name* and *notion* of a *disciple* implying, and the nature of the thing itself requiring, both these qualifications.

Now the discussion of the words before us shall lie in these following particulars:

1st, To shew, What is here meant by the *scribe*.

2^{dly}, What *by being instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. And

3^{dly} and *lastly*, What *by bringing out of his treasure things new and old*; and how upon this account he stands compared to an *householder*.

And I. Concerning the word *scribe*. It was a name, which amongst the *Jews* was applied to two sorts of officers.

1. To a *civil*; and so it signifies a *notary*, or in a large sense any one employed to draw up *deeds* or *writings*. Whether in an higher station or degree, as we read in the 2 *Kings*

4 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1: xxii. and the 3d *verse*, That *Shaphan* was γραμματεὺς βασιλέως, the *King's scribe*, or secretary; or, as in a lower sense, and acceptance of the word, we find this appellation given to that officer, who appeared in quelling the uproar at *Ephesus*, as we read in *Acts* xix. where in the 35th *verse*, he is called γραμματεὺς, which (I think) we may fitly enough render, (as our *English* text does) the *town-clerk*, or *publick notary of the city*. To this sort also some would refer those mentioned in *Matth.* ii. and the 4th *verse*, who are there called *the scribes of the people*; as if they were such notaries, as we have been speaking of; but the business, about which we read in that chapter, that *Herod* called them together, seems to evince the contrary; which was to enquire of such as were skilled in the writings of the prophets, *When and where the Messiah was to be born*. The resolution of which, was very unlikely to be had from those who were only notaries and journeymen to courts, to draw up inditements, bonds, leases, contracts, and the like. And from whence we may, no doubt, conclude, that this sort of *scribes* was quite of another nature from the *scribe* here alluded to in the text; and which shall be next treated of: And therefore,

2. This

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 5

2. This name *scribe* signifies a church-officer, one skilful, and conversant in the law, to interpret and explain it. For still we find the scribes reckoned with the great doctors of the Jewish church, and for the most part joined with the Pharisees in the writings of the Evangelists, and by St. Paul with the disputer of this world, 1 Cor. i. 20. and sometimes called also, νομικοὶ, lawyers, as in St. Luke vii. 30. and in St. Luke xi. 52. that is to say, men skilful and expert in the Mosaick law. Not that these scribes were really, and properly any part of the Pharisees (as some have thought;) for Pharisee was the name of a sect, scribe of an office: And whereas we read in Acts xxiii. and the 9th verse, of the γραμματεῖς, there said to be τῆ μέρος τῶν Φαρισαίων, of part of the Pharisees; the word [of part] is not to be understood in respect of distribution, as it signifies a correlate to the whole, but in respect of opinion; as that they were of the Pharisees part or side, or (in other words) joined with them in some of their opinions; as possibly others of them might join with the sadduces in some of theirs: By scribe therefore must be here meant a doctor or expounder of the law to the people; such an one, as Ezra that excellent person, so renowned amongst the Jews; who in

6 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

Ezra vii. ver. 6. is said to have *been a ready scribe in the law of Moses.* For though, indeed, the word *scribe* in the *English* and *Latin* imports barely a *writer*, and the *Greek* γραμματεὺς, by its derivation from γράφω, strictly signifies no more; yet by its nearer derivation from γράμμα, which signifies a *letter*, it seems to represent to us the *nature* of the office from the *notation* of the *name*, viz. that *these scribes were men of the bare letter, or the text*; whose business it was to explain and give the *literal sense* and meaning of the law. And therefore, that the men here spoken of, whom the *Jews* accounted of such eminent skill in it, should by their office be only *writers*, or *transcribers* of it, can with no more reason, I think, be affirmed, than if we should allow him to be a skilful divine, who should transcribe other mens *works*, and, which is more, preach them when he had done. But

2. As for the meaning of that expression of *being instructed unto the kingdom of heaven.* By *the kingdom of heaven* is here signified to us, only the preaching of the gospel, or the condition and state of the church, under the gospel; as *repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, that is, *the gospel is shortly to be preached*: Now we are to take notice, that it was the way of Christ in his preaching to the *Jews*, to express
the

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 7

the offices, and things belonging to his church under the gospel, by alluding to those of the Jewish church under the law, as being known, and familiar to them. Hence he calls a minister, or preacher of the gospel, a scribe; and this from the analogy of what the scribe did in the explication of the *Mosaick* law, with what the gospel-minister was to do, in preaching and pressing home the doctrines of Christianity upon the heart and conscience; much the harder work (God knows) of the two.

Now the word, which we here render *instructed*, in the Greek is μαθητευθεῖς, one who was taught, schooled or disciplined to the work by long exercise and study. He was not to be inspired, or blown into the ministry, but to come to it by mature study and labour. He was to fetch his preparations from industry, not infusion. And forasmuch as Christ's design was to express evangelical officers by legal, there must (as I shew) be some resemblance between them; and since the matter, or subject they were engaged in, was wholly diverse, this resemblance was to hold, at least, in the qualification of the persons, viz. That as the scribe of the law did with much labour stock himself with all variety of learning requisite to find out the sense of the same, so the evangelical scribe, or preacher, should bring as much learning,

8 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

learning, and bestow as much labour in his employment, as the other did in his; especially since it *required* full as much, and *deserved* a great deal more: And so we pass to the

3. *Thing* proposed, which was to shew what is to be understood by *bringing out of his treasure things new and old*. By treasure is here signified that, which in *Latin* is called *penus*; a *store-house*, or *repository*; and the bringing out thence things new and old was (as some are of opinion) a kind of proverb, or proverbial speech among the *Hebrews*, expressing a man's giving a plentiful or liberal entertainment to his friends, and such as came about him. And accordingly, as here borrowed from the *householder*, and applied to the *gospel-scribe* in the text, it makes the drift and import of the whole parable to amount to this: that as the former, if a man of substance and sufficiency, of a large stock, and as large a mind, will entertain his friends and guests with plenty and variety of provision, answerable to the difference of mens palates, as well as to the difference of the season; not confining them to the same standing common fare, but, as occasion requires, adding something of more cost and rarity besides; so our *gospel-scribe* or *preacher*, in the entertainment of his spiritual guests, is not

Serm. 1. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 9

not always to set before them, only the main substantials of religion, whether for belief, or practice, but as the matter shall require, to add also *illustration* to the one, and *enforcement* to the other, sometimes persuading, sometimes terrifying; and accordingly addressing himself to the afflicted, and desponding with *gospel lenitives*, and to the hard and obstinate with *legal corrosives*; and since the relish of all is not the same, he is to apply to the vulgar with plain familiar similitudes, and to the learned with greater choiceness of language, and closeness of argument; and moreover, since every age of the church more peculiarly needs the clearer discussion of some truth or other, then more particularly doubted of, or opposed; therefore to the inculcating the general acknowledged points of Christianity, he is to add something of the controversies, opinions, and vices of the times; otherwise he cannot reach mens minds and inclinations, which are apt to be argued this way, or that way, according to different times and occasions; and consequently he falls so far short of a *good orator*, and much more of an *accurate preacher*.

This, I conceive, is the genuine and full sense of the words we are now upon, and which I shall yet farther strengthen with this observation: 'that we shall find that Christ's

10 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

‘ design all along the Evangelists was to place
 ‘ the œconomy of the church under the go-
 ‘ spel, above that of the *Jewish* church under
 ‘ the law, as more excellent in every parti-
 ‘ cular.’ Now it was the way of the scribes
 then, to dwell only upon the letter of the law,
 and what *Moses* said; shewing the construction,
 the coherence, and force of his words, only
 sometimes sprinkling them a little with tradi-
 tion, and the pompous allegation of their an-
 cient *rabbies*, Ἐπρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις. But Christ,
 who (we read) taught with authority, and
 not as the scribes; as one not only *expounding*,
 but also *commanding*, the words, took a free-
 dom of expression, in shewing not the sense
 of *Moses* only, but the farther sense and in-
 tent of God himself speaking to *Moses*; and
 then cloathing this sense in parables, simili-
 tudes, and other advantages of rhetorick, so
 as to give it an easier entrance and admissi-
 on into the mind and affections; and what
 he did himself, he recommended to the practice
 of his disciples. So that, I think, we may not
 unfitly account for the meaning of our Savi-
 our in this chapter thus: you see how the
 scribes of the law with much anxiety and
 niceness confine themselves to the letter of
Moses, but *the scribe who is instructed unto*
the kingdom of heaven, and fitted to preach

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* II

the gospel, must not dwell only upon the letter and shell of things, but often enlarge and amplify upon the subject he handles, adapting his discourse to the various circumstances, tempers, and apprehensions of his hearers; and so letting it rise, or fall in the *degrees* of its plainness, or quickness, according to his hearers dulness, or docility.

Thus, I hope, I have made out the full import of the words, and the design of our Saviour in them, which I shall now more thoroughly prosecute in this proposition, naturally resulting from them so explained, *viz.*

That the greatest advantages, both as to largeness of natural, and exquisiteness of acquired abilities, are not only consistent with, but required to the due performance of the work and business of a preacher of the gospel.

Not that I affirm, that every one, who has not such a furniture of parts and knowledge, is therefore wholly unfit or forbidden to be a preacher; for then most of us might for ever sit down and adore, but not venture upon this work. But in giving a rule for any thing or action, we must assign the utmost perfection, which either of them is capable of, and to which men ought to aspire; not to which, they of necessity must or can attain.

We

12 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

We know the *copy* always falls short of the *original*, and the *performance* of the *precept*. But still the rule must be *absolute*, and highly perfect; otherwise, we should never look upon our improvement, as our *duty*, or our imperfections, as our *defects*.

In the handling of the proposition drawn forth, I shall shew,

1st, What qualifications are required as necessary to a minister of the word, from the force of the comparison between *him*, and the *scribe mentioned in the text*.

2^{dly}, I shall shew the reasons to evince, and prove their necessity: and

3^{dly}, I shall draw some inferences from the whole.

And first, concerning *the qualifications required, &c.*

I shall bring them under these two.

1. An ability and strength of the powers, and faculties of the mind. And

2. An habitual preparation of the same, by study, exercise, and improvement.

Which two (I conceive) contain all that both *nature* and *art* can do in this matter.

And first, for the first of these two.

1. A natural ability and strength of the powers, and faculties of the mind. And what these are, is apparent, *viz. judgment, memory, and invention.*

Now,

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 13

Now, whether these three are three distinct things both in *being* distinguished from one another, and likewise from the substance of the soul itself, considered without any such faculties, but only receiving these several denominations from the several respects arising from the several actions exerted immediately by itself upon *several objects*, or several qualities of the same object; I say, whether of these two it is, is not easy to decide; and it is well, that it is not necessary. *Aquinas*, and most with him affirm the former, and *Scotus* with his followers the latter. But yet to assert with him, that in a *created* nature, *essence* and *power* are the same, seems too near and bold a step to the incommunicable *simplicity* of the *divine*; and according to the received way of arguing will pass for a great absurdity. However, not to insist farther upon a point merely philosophical, but supposing (at least probably) that (according to the common opinion) the soul acts, or works by *powers* and *faculties*, as well as *habits*, distinct from its own *substance*; I proceed to shew the necessity of the three fore-mentioned *faculties* in the business of the ministry. And,

1st, For that great leading one, the *judgment*; without which, how can any controversy

14 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

verfy in philosophy or divinity be duly managed, stated or determined? How can that which is *ambiguous* be cleared, that which is *fallacious* be detected, or even *truth itself* be defended? How, where the words of scripture may bear several senses, some *proper*, and some *figurative*, can we be assured, which the writer, or speaker of them intended them in? How also, without this, when a scripture has been corrupted, partly by filching some words out of it, and partly by a supposititious foisting of some in, shall the whole be rescued from the imposture pass'd upon it, and so restored true and genuine to itself? And lastly, how shall many seeming clashings, and dark passages in sacred history and chronology be placed in such a light, as may thoroughly satisfy, or at least effectually silence the doubtful and exceptionous? All which particulars (with many more of the like nature) being confessedly knotty and difficult, can never be accorded, but by a competent stock of critical learning; and can any one (even according to the very *signification* of the word) be said to be a *critick*, and yet not *judicious*? And then,

2dly, For *memory*. This may be reckoned two-fold. 1. That which serves to treasure up our reading, or observations. And

2. That

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 15

2. That which serves to suggest to us, in our reciting, or repeating of any thing, which we had endeavoured to commit to our memory before. I distinguish them, because one may be, and often is excellent, where the other is deficient. But now, were this never so large, yet theology is of that vast compass, as to employ and exhaust it. For what volumes are there of *antiquity*, church-history, and other divine learning, which well deserve reading; and to what purpose do we read, if we cannot remember? But then also, for the reciting or repeating part of memory, that is so necessary, that *Cicero* himself observes of oratory, (which indeed upon a sacred subject is preaching) that upon the want of memory alone, * *Omnia, etiam si præclarissima fuerint, in oratore peritura*. And we know that to a popular auditory it is upon the matter, *all*. There being, in the esteem of many, but little difference between *sermons read*, and *homilies*, save only this, that homilies are *much better*. And then for the

3d. Faculty, which is, *invention*. A faculty acting chiefly in the strength of what is offered it by the *imagination*. This is so far from being admitted by many as necessary,

* *Primo libro de oratore.*

that

16 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

that it is decry'd by them as utterly unlawful; such grand exemplars I mean, as make their own abilities the sole measure of what is fit or unfit, lawful or unlawful; so that what they themselves cannot reach, others, forsooth, ought not to attempt. But I see not why divinity should suffer for their narrowness, and be deprived of the service of a most useful, and excellent endowment of the mind, and which gives a gloss, and a shine to all the rest. For I reckon upon this as a great truth, that there can be no endowment in the soul of man, which God himself is the cause and giver of, but may even in its highest and choicest operations be sanctified and employed in the work of the ministry. And there is also another principle, which I account altogether as true as the former; namely, *that piety engages no man to be dull*; though lately, I confess, it passed with some for a mark of *regeneration*. And when I shall see these principles disproved, I shall be ready to grant all exercise of the fancy or invention, in the handling things sacred, to be unlawful. As fancy, indeed, is often taken in the worst sense for a conceited, curious, whimsical brain, which is apt to please itself in strange, odd, and ungrounded notions; so I confess, that no-
thing

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed*, &c. 17

thing is more contrary to, or destructive of true divinity; but then I must add withall, that if fancy be taken in this sense, those who damn it in its other sober and right acceptation, have much the greatest share of it themselves. But if on the other hand, we take fancy for that power or ability of the mind, which suggests apposite and pertinent expressions, and handsome ways of cloathing and setting off those truths, which the judgment has rationally pitched upon, it will be found full as useful, as any of all the three mentioned by us, in the work of preaching; and consequently slighted and disapproved of by none but such as envy that in others, which they are never like to be envied for the want of in themselves. He therefore, who thinks to be a *scribe instructed for the kingdom of heaven*, without a competency of *judgment, memory, and invention*, attempts a great *superstructure*, where there is no *foundation*; and this, surely, is a very preposterous way to *edify* either himself or others.

And thus much for the first of the two qualifications of our evangelical scribe; to wit, a tolerable ability, or strength of the powers, and *faculties* of the mind; particularly of those three, *judgment, memory,*

18 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

and *invention*. I proceed now to the other, and

2d. *Qualification* : Which was an *habitual preparation* by study, exercise, and due improvement of the same. Powers act but weakly and irregularly, till they are heightened and perfected by their habits. A well radicated habit, in a lively, vegete *faculty*, is like an *apple of gold* in a picture of silver ; 'tis perfection upon perfection, 'tis a coat of mail upon our armour, and, in a word, it is the raising of the soul, at least, one story higher. For take off but these wheels, and the powers in all their operations will drive but heavily. Now it is not enough to have books, or for a man to have his divinity in his pocket, or upon the shelf : but he must have mastered his notions, till they even incorporate into his mind, so as to be able to produce, and wield them upon all occasions ; and not when a difficulty is proposed, and a performance enjoined, to say, that he will consult such and such authors : For this is not to be a divine, who is rather to be a *walking library*, than a *walking index*. As, to go no farther than the similitude in the text, we should not account him a good or generous house-keeper, who should not have always something of standing provision by him, so as never to be surprized, but
that

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 19

that he should still be found able to *treat* his friend at least, though perhaps not always presently *to feast him*: So the scribe here spoken of should have an inward, lasting fulness and sufficiency, to support and bear him up; especially where present performance urges, and actual preparation can be but short. Thus, it is not the oil in the *Wick*, but in the *Vessel*, which must feed the *lamp*. The former indeed may cause a *present blaze*, but it is the latter which must *give it a lasting light*. It is not the spending-money a man has in his pocket, but his hoards in the chest, or in the bank, which must make him rich. A dying man has his breath in his nostrils, but to have it in the lungs is that which must preserve life. Nor will it suffice to have raked up a few notions here and there, or to rally up all one's little utmost into one discourse, which can constitute a divine, or give a man stock enough to set up with; any more than a soldier who had filled his napsack should thereupon set up for keeping house. No; a man would then quickly be drained, his short stock would serve but for one meeting in ordinary converse, and he would be in danger of meeting with the same company twice. And therefore there must be store, plenty,

20 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

and a treasure, lest he turn broker in divinity, and having run the rounds of a beaten exhausted *common place*, be forced to stand still, or go the same round over again; pretending to his auditors, that it is profitable for them to hear the same truths often inculcated to them; though, I humbly conceive, that to inculcate the same truths, is not of necessity to repeat *the same words*. And therefore to avoid such beggarly pretences, there must be an habitual preparation as to the work we are now speaking of. And that in two respects :

1. In respect of the *generality of knowledge* required to it. The truth is, if we consider that great multitude of things to be known, and the labour and time required to the knowledge of each particular, it is enough to discourage and dash all attempt, and cause a careless despair. What *Hippocrates* said of the cure of the body, is much truer of the cure of the soul, *That life is short, and art long*. And I might add also, that the mind is weak and narrow, and the business difficult and large. And should I say, that preaching was the least part of a divine, it would I believe be thought a bold word, and look like a paradox, (as the world goes) but perhaps, for all that, never the farther from being a great truth.

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 21

truth. For is it not a greater thing, to untie the knots of many intricate and perplexing controversies? And to bring together all the ends of a loose, and hardly cohering hypothesis? To refute the opinions, and stop the mouths of gainfayers, whereas some of them are so opposite amongst themselves, that you can hardly confute one, but with arguments taken from the other, though both of them equally erroneous? In which and the like cases to carry an argument for the defence of truth so warily and exactly, that an adversary shall not sometimes be able to pervert it to the support of an error (since though the argument may be materially the same, yet the different application and management of it may produce quite different inferences from it.) This, no doubt is a matter of great difficulty, and no less dexterity. And the like also may be said of casuistical divinity for resolving *cases of conscience*; especially where several obligations seem to interfere and (as it were) jostle one another, so that it seems impossible to the conscience to turn either way without sin, and while it does so, must needs be held under great distraction. To clear a way out of which, being a work certainly depending upon much knowledge of the *canon and civil laws*, as well as of the principles of divinity, it must needs

22 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

require much toil and labour for the casuist to provide himself with materials for this purpose, and then no less art and skill to manage and apply them to the conscience. And as it is highly requisite, that this should in some measure be found in every divine, and in its height and perfection in some, which since it cannot well be, but by the whole employment of a man's time, not took off or diverted by other ministerial business, it so far shews the happy constitution of such churches, as afford place of suitable scholastick maintenance (without the trouble of a pastoral charge) for such, whose abilities carry them to the study of the *controversial*, or *critical part* of theology, rather than any other belonging to the ministry. But on the contrary, where there is no such proper maintenance allotted for a divine, but by preaching only; let us suppose, that which in such a case we easily may; That one had a peculiar inclination to controversy, or to dive into antiquity, or to search critically into the original letter of the scriptures; and withall had little inclination, and perhaps less ability, to preach, but yet knew no other way to live as a divine, but by preaching. Do we not here lose an excellent casuist, an accurate critick, or profound school-divine, only to make a very mean preacher? Who, had he
had

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 23

had the forementioned opportunity of encouragement, might have been eminently serviceable to the church in any of those other ways, while he only serves the natural necessities of life in this. And this has been observed by a * learned Knight, to have been an inconvenience even in those days, when the revenues of the church were not wholly *reformed* from it; that for our not then setting aside whole societies for the managing of controversies and nothing else, as the church of *Rome* finds it necessary to do, divines for the most part handle controversies only as a diversion in the midst of their other pastoral labours, and many of them have performed it accordingly. For as a man's faculties will not suffice him for all arts and sciences, so neither will they sometimes reach all the parts and difficulties of any of them. But the late times made the matter yet ten times worse with us, when the *rooters* and *thorough-reformers* made clean work with the church, and took away all, and so by stripping the clergy of their rights and preferments, left us in a fair posture (you may be sure) both *offensive* and *defensive*, to encounter our acute, and learned adversaries the *Jesuits*. For then the polemicks of the *field* had quite silenced

* Sir Edwyn Sandys in his *Europæ Speculum*.

24 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

those of the *schools*. All being took up and busied, some in pulpits, and some in tubs, in the grand work of preaching and holding forth, and that of *edification* (as the word then went;) so that they seemed like an army of men armed only with *trowels*, and perhaps amongst thousands only a *Saul* and a *Jonathan* with *swords* in their hands, only one or two with scholastick artillery, and preparation for controversy. But this by the way, and as a sad instance to shew how fatal it is, that when divinity takes in so large a compass of learning, and that for so many uses, the church should be robbed of the proper, and most effectual means of stocking herself with it.

But some perhaps will reply; what needs all this? we are resolved to preach only, and look no farther, and for this much *reading* cannot be requisite, except only, for the *delivery of our sermons*: For we will *preach our own experiences*. To which I answer, That be this as it may; but yet if these men preach their own experiences (as they call them) without some other sort of *reading* and knowledge, both their hearers, and themselves too, will quickly have more than sufficient *experience* of their confidence, and ridiculous impertinence. But as there are certain mountebanks and quacks in physick, so there are
much

Serm. 1. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 25

much the same also in divinity, such as have only two or three little experiments, and popular harangues to entertain and amuse the vulgar with; but being wholly unacquainted with the solid grounds and rules of science, from whence alone come true sufficiency and skill, they are pitifully ignorant and useless as to any great and worthy purposes; and fit for little else, but to shew the world how easily *fools* may be imposed upon by *knaves*. And thus much for *habitual preparation* in point of *knowledge*, besides which, there is required also in the

2d. Place, the like *preparation as to significant speech and expression*. For as I shew, that by *knowledge* a man informs himself, so by *expression* he conveys that knowledge to others; and as bare words convey, so the propriety and elegance of them gives force and facility to the conveyance. But because this is like to have more opposers; especially such as call a speaking coherently upon any sacred subject, *a blending of man's wisdom with the word, an offering of strange fire*; and account the being *pertinent*, even the next door to the being *profane*, I say, for their sakes, I shall prove a thing clear in itself by scripture, and that not by arguments, or consequences drawn from thence, but by downright instances occurring in
in

26 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

in it, and those so very plain, that even such as themselves cannot be ignorant of them. For in God's word we have not only a body of *religion*, but also a system of the best *rhetorick*: And as the highest things require the highest expressions, so we shall find nothing in scripture so sublime in itself, but it is reached, and sometimes overtopp'd by the sublimity of the expression. And first, where did majesty ever ride in more splendor, than in those descriptions of the divine power in *Job*, in the xxxviiith, xxxixth, and xlth chapters? And what triumph was ever celebrated with higher, livelier, and more exalted poetry, than in the song of *Moses*, in xxxii. *Deut.*? And then for the passions of the soul; which being things of the highest transport, and most wonderful and various operation in human nature, are therefore the proper object and business of rhetoric: Let us take a view how the scripture expresses the most noted and powerful of them. And here, what poetry ever parallel'd *Solomon* in his description of love, as to all the ways, effects, and extasies, and little tyrannies of that commanding passion? See *Ovid* with his *omnia vincit amor*, &c. And *Virgil* with his *vulnus alit venis* & *cæco carpitur igne*, &c. How jejune and thin are they to the poetry of *Solomon*, in the viiith chapter of the *Canticles*,

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 27

ticles, and the 6th verse; *love is strong as death, and jealousy cruel as the grave?* And as for his description of beauty, he describes that so, that he even transcribes it into his expressions. And where do we read such strange risings and fallings, now the faintings and languishings, now the terrors and astonishments of *despair* venting themselves in such high amazing strains, as in lxxvii. *Psalms*? Or where did we ever find sorrow flowing forth in such a natural prevailing *pathos*, as in the *lamentations* of *Jeremy*? One would think, that every letter was wrote with a tear, every word was the noise of a breaking heart; that the author was a man compacted of sorrows; disciplined to grief from his infancy; one who never breathed but in sighs, nor spoke but in a groan. So that he, who said he would not read the scripture *for fear of spoiling his style*, shewed himself as much a blockhead as an * *Atheist*, and to have as small a gust of the elegancies of expression, as of the sacredness of the matter. And shall we now think that the scripture forbids all ornament of speech, and engages men to be dull, flat, and slovenly in all their discourses? But let us look a little farther, and see whether the new testament abro-

* *Politian.*

28 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

gates what we see so frequently used in the old? And for this, what mean all the parables used by our Saviour, the known and greatest elegancies of speech? so that if this way was unlawful before, Christ by his example has authorized and sanctified it since, and if good and lawful, has confirmed it. But as for the men whom we contend with; I see not why they should exterminate all rhetorick, who still treat of things figuratively, and by the worst of figures too; their whole discourse being one continued *Meiosis* to diminish, lessen, and debase the great things of the gospel infinitely below themselves. Besides that I need not go beyond the very words of the text for an impregnable proof of this: For Christ says, that a *scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven ought to bring out of his treasure things new and old*. Now I demand, what are the things here to be understood? For as to the matter, which he is here to treat of, the articles of the Christian religion are and still must be the same, and therefore there can be no such variety as *new and old* in them. Wherefore it remains, that this variety can be only in the way of expressing those things. Besides that our Saviour Christ, in these words, particularly relates to the manner of his own preaching, upon occasion of the very sermon, which we

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 29

we find all along this chapter delivered in parables; so that by *new and old* may probably be meant nothing else, but a plenty, or fluent dexterity of the most suitable words, and pregnant arguments, to set off and enforce gospel-truths. For questionless, when Christ says, that a *scribe* must be stocked with *things new and old*, we must not think that he meant, that he should have *an board of old sermons*, (whosoever made them) with a *bundle of new opinions*; for this certainly would have furnished out such entertainment to his spiritual guests, as no rightly-disposed *palate* could ever relish, or *stomach* bear. And therefore, the thing which Christ here drives at, must needs be only variety and copiousness of sacred eloquence.

And thus much for the first of the three general heads proposed by us for the handling these words; which was to shew the qualifications necessary for a *Gospel-scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven*. And these were two; first, *habitual preparation*, in point of learning or knowledge; and secondly, the other in point of significant speech or expression: I proceed now to the

II. General head propos'd; which was, to assign the reasons of this their necessity; and these shall be three.

I. Be-

30 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

1. Because the preacher works upon mens minds only as *a moral agent*, and as one, who can do no more than persuade, and not by any physical efficiency. And herein I do not say, that *conversion* is caused only by *moral suasion* : For if we consider the strength of our corruption, and how it has insinuated itself into the very principles of nature, and seised upon those powers, which are but very little under the command of the intellectual part, I think it cannot be subdued by mere *suasion*, which in its utmost, reaches only to the convincing of that : But the heart must be changed by a much higher power, even by an immediate omnipotent work of God's spirit infusing a quality into the soul, not there before, which by degrees shall weaken, and work out our inherent natural corruption : And this being a creating work, is done solely and immediately by God himself, forasmuch as creation admits of no instrument, as being an effect of that infinite creative power, which cannot be conveyed to an instrumental agent.

But you will say then, if conversion be the sole immediate work of God, what need is there of a preacher ? And how can he be said to be, as usually he is, God's instrument in the work of a man's conversion ; to which I answer, 1st, That *God's institution of preach-*

Serm. 1. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 31

ing is a sufficient reason for it, though we knew no other. 2dly, That when the preacher is said to be an *instrument* in the conversion of a sinner, it is not meant, that he is such, by a properly physical efficiency, but only *morally*, and by *persuasion*. I explain my meaning thus. A *physical instrument*, or such as is found in natural efficient productions, is that, which partaking of the power, force, and causality of the principal agent from thence derived to it, produces a suitable effect. As when I cut or divide a thing, the force of my hand is conveyed to the knife, by virtue of which, the knife cuts or divides. And thus, I say, the preacher cannot be the instrument of conversion, for the reason above-mentioned; because that infinite power, which *does convert*, cannot be conveyed to any infinite being whatsoever. But a *moral instrument* is quite of another nature; and is that (as I may so express it) *Non quo producente, sed quo interveniente sequitur effectus*. Not that, which conversion is effected by, but that without which (ordinarily at least) it is not. So that while the minister is preaching and *persuading*, God puts forth another *secret influence* quite different from that of the preacher, though still going along with it: And it is this, by which God immediately touches the sinner's heart,

32 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

heart, and converts him. Howbeit, the preacher is still said to be instrumental in this great work; forasmuch as his preaching is subordinate to, and most commonly (as has been said) accompanies it: God not being pleased to exert his action, but in concurrence with the preacher exerting his. And thus having given God his prerogative, and the preacher his due, by shewing, how he is morally instrumental to the work of the sinner's conversion by *persuading*; I infer the necessity of those forementioned abilities and *preparations* for preaching, as being the most proper means and instruments of *persuasion*. See this exemplified in *St. Paul* himself, and in him observe, when he deals with the *Jews*, how he endeavours to insinuate what he says, by pleading his own *kindred* with them, speaking honourably of *Abraham*, and of the law, and calling the Gospel *the law of faith*; and affirming, that it did *establish the law*. All which was the true art of natural rhetorick, thus to convey his sense under those names and notions, which he knew were highly pleasing to them. But then on the other hand, when he would win over the *Gentiles*; forasmuch as there was a standing feud between them and the *Jews*; (the *Jews*, like the men here of late, for ever unsainting all the world, besides themselves;)

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 33

observe how he deals with them. He tells them of the rejection of the *Jews*, and the *Gentiles* being ingrafted in their room: And that *Abraham* believed unto justification before he was *circumcised*, and therefore was no less the father of the *uncircumcised* believers, than of the *circumcised*. He tells them also, that the believing *Gentiles* were his *spiritual seed*, but the *Jews*, as such, were only his *carnal*. He takes occasion also to undervalue circumcision, and the ceremonial law, as abused by the *Jews*, and in themselves things most hateful to other nations. Now all this was hugely pleasing to the *Gentiles*, and therefore very apt to persuade. But had not *St. Paul* been a man of learning and skill in the art and methods of rhetorick, he could not have suited such opposite exhortations to such different sorts of men with so much dexterity. And the same course, in dealing with men's minds, is a minister of the word to take now. As suppose, he would dissuade men from any vice, he is to found his dissuatives upon the peculiar temper of the man; so that, if for instance, he should find it needful to preach against drunkenness, and there were several in the congregation addicted to several sorts of vice, as some to pride or ambition, some to covetousness, or the like; here, besides the general ar-

34 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

gument from the punishments of the other world denounced against these, and such other vices; if he would do his business effectually, he must also tell the *ambitious or proud man*, that his drunkenness would *disgrace* him, and make him the scorn and contempt of all the world about him; and the *covetous man*, that it would certainly waste his estate, and *beggar him*. Whereas should he, on the other hand, transplace these arguments, and dissuade him who is proud from drinking, because it would beggar him, and him who is covetous, because it would disgrace him, doubtless he would prevail but little; because his argument would not strike that proper principle which each of them were governed by. And now what can this be grounded upon, but upon natural philosophy, and a knowledge of mens passions and interests, the great and chief springs of all their actions? And upon the like ground it is, that for a preacher in his discourses to the people to insist only upon universals, is but a cold, faint, languid way of persuading or dissuading; as to tell men in general, that they are sinners, and that going on in sin without repentance, they are under the curse and wrath of God; all which they think they knew before, and accordingly received it as a word of course, and too slightly regard

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 35

regard it : But conviction, the usual fore-runner of, and preparative to *conversion*, is from particulars, as if the preacher should tell his hearers, that he who continues to cheat, cozen, and equivocate, is a wicked and impenitent wretch ; and that he who drinks, and swears, and whores, is the person to whom the curse directly belongs : And this seriously urged, and discreetly applied, will, if any thing, carry it home to the conscience, and lodge it there too. And now is not the reason of this method also to be fetched from philosophy, as well as from religion ? For we know, that men naturally have only a weak, confused knowledge of universals, but a clear and lively idea of particulars. And that which gives a clear representation of a thing to the *apprehension*, makes a suitable *impression of it* upon the will and affections. Whosoever therefore pretends to be a preacher, must know, that his main business is to *persuade*, and that without the helps of human learning, this can hardly be done to any purpose. So that if he finds himself wholly destitute of these, and has nothing else to trust to, but some groundless, windy, and phantastick notions about *the spirit*, (the common sanctuary of fanatics and enthusiasts) he would do well to *look back*, and taking his *hand* off from this *plough*, to put it

36 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1:

to another, much fitter for him. But in the mean time, as for ourselves, who pretend not to a pitch above other mortals, nor dare rely upon inspiration instead of industry, we must rest content, to revere the wisdom, and follow the examples of those who went before us, and enjoin'd us the study of the arts and sciences; as the surest and most tried way to *that of divinity*.

2. A second reason for the necessity of these preparations for the ministry, shall be taken from this consideration; that at the first promulgation of the gospel, God was pleased to furnish the Apostles and preachers of it with abilities proper for that great work, after a supernatural and miraculous way. For still we find, that the scripture represents the Apostles as *ignorant and illiterate men*, and that the *chief priests and elders of the Jews* took particular notice of them, as such, in *Acts* iv. and the 13th *verse*. The text there gives them this character, that they were *ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοι, καὶ ἰδιῶται*, that is to say, according to the strict signification of the word, men unlearned, and of a mean and plebeian condition. Nevertheless, since they were appointed by God to preach the gospel to several nations; a work requiring a considerable knowledge of the languages of those nations, and impossible to be performed

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 37

performed without it ; and yet no less impossible for the Apostles, having neither time, nor opportunity to acquire that knowledge in the natural, ordinary course of study ; God himself supplies this defect, and endues them with all necessary qualifications by immediate and divine infusion. So that *being filled with the Holy Ghost*, as we read in *Acts* ii. and the 4th verse, *they forthwith spoke with other tongues* ; and that so clearly, plainly, and intelligibly, as both to convince, and astonish all who heard them ; even those of the most different nations and languages, as well as their own countrymen the *Jews* themselves. From whence I thus argue : That if the forementioned helps and assistances were not always of most singular use, and sometimes of indispensable necessity to the calling of a divine, certainly the most wise God would never have been at the expence of a miracle, to endow men, of that calling, with them. For he, who observes that order and decorum in all his works, as never to over-do any thing, nor carry on the business of his ordinary providence, by extraordinary and supernatural ways, would doubtless (in the eye of the world at least) seem to debase, and make cheap those noblest instances of his power, should he ever exert them, but where he saw it of the highest concern to his own honour,

38 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.
and man's happiness, that something should be
done for both, which bare nature, *left to itself,*
could never do.

3. The third and last reason for the necessity of such preparations for the ministry, shall be drawn from *the dignity of the subject of it,* which is divinity. And what is divinity, but a doctrine treating of the nature, attributes, and works of the great God, as he stands related to rational creatures? And the way how rational creatures may serve, worship, and enjoy him? And if so, is not the subject-matter of it the greatest, and the design and business of it the noblest in the world, as being no less than to direct an immortal soul to its endless and eternal felicity? It has been disputed, to which of the intellectual habits, mentioned by *Aristotle*, it most properly belongs; some referring it to *wisdom*, some to *science*, some to *prudence*, and some compounding it of several of them together: But those seem to speak most to the purpose, who will not have it *formally* any one of them, but *virtually*, and in an *eminent transcendent* manner *all*. And now can we think, that a doctrine of that depth, that height, and that vast compass, grasping within it all the perfections and dimensions of human science, does not worthily claim all the preparations, whereby the wit

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 39

and industry of man can fit him for it? All other sciences are accounted but hand-maids to divinity; and shall the hand-maid be richer adorned, and better cloathed, and set off, than her lady? In other things, the *art* usually excels the matter, and the ornament we bestow, is better than the subject we bestow it upon: but here we are sure, that we have such a subject before us, as not only calls for, but commands, and not only commands, but deserves our utmost application to it; a subject of that native, that inherent worth, that it is not capable of any addition from us, but shines both through, and above all the artificial lustre we can put upon it. The study of divinity is indeed difficult, and we are to labour hard, and dig deep for it; but then we dig in a *golden mine*, which equally *invites and rewards* our labour.

And thus much *for the second general head* at first proposed, for the handling of the words; which was to shew, *the reasons of the necessity of the preparations spoken of to the study of divinity*. Of which we have assigned three.

And so we pass at length to the *third and last general head* proposed, which was, to shew, *what useful inferences may be drawn* from the foregoing particulars. And the first shall be a just and severe reproof to two sorts of men.

40 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

1. To such as disparage, and detract from the grandeur of the gospel, by a puerile and indecent levity in their discourses of it to the people.

2. To such as depreciate, and (as much as in them lies) debase the same, by a coarse, careless, rude and insipid way of handling the great and invaluable truths of it.

Both of them certainly objects of the most deserved reproof.

1. For those who disparage and detract from the gospel, by a puerile and indecent sort of levity in their discourses upon it, so extremely below the subject discoursed of. All vain, luxuriant allegories, rhyming *Cadencies* of similiary words, are such pitiful embellishments of speech, as serve for nothing, but to embase divinity; and the use of them, but like the plaistering of marble, or the painting of gold, the glory of which is to be seen, and to shine by no other lustre but their own. What *Quintilian* most discreetly says of *Seneca's* handling philosophy, that he did *rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis frangere*, break, and (as it were) emasculate the weight of his subject by little affected sentences, the same may with much more reason be applied to the practice of those, who detract from the excellency of things favored by a comical lightness of expression: As
when

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 41

when their prayers shall be set out in such a dress, as if they did not supplicate, but compliment Almighty God ; and their sermons so garnished with quibbles and trifles, as if they played with truth and immortality ; and neither believed these things themselves, nor were willing that others should. For is it possible, that a man in his senses should be merry and jocular with eternal life, and eternal death, if he really designed to strike the awful impression of either into the consciences of men ? No, no ; this is no less a contradiction to common sense and reason, than to the strictest notions of religion. And as this can by no means be accounted divinity, so neither indeed can it pass for wit ; which yet such chiefly seem to affect in such performances. For these are as much the stains of true human eloquence, as they are the blots and blemishes of divinity ; and might be as well confuted out of *Quintilian's* institutions, as out of *St. Paul's* epistles. Such are wholly mistaken in the nature of *wit* : For *true wit* is a severe and manly thing. Wit in divinity is nothing else, but sacred truths suitably expressed. 'Tis not shreds of *Latin* or *Greek*, nor a *Deus dixit*, and a *Deus benedixit*, nor those little quirks, or divisions into the *ὅτι*, the *διότι*, and the *καθότι*, or the *egress*, *regress*, and *progress*, and other such stuff

42 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

stuff (much like the style of a lease) that can properly be called *wit*. For that is not *wit*, which consists not with *wisdom*. For can you think that it had not been an easy matter for any one, in the text here pitched upon by me, to have run out into a long, fulsome allegory, comparing the scribe and the householder together, and now and then to have cast in a rhyme, with a *quid*, a *quo*, and a *quomodo*, and the like? But certainly it would then have been much more difficult for the judicious to hear such things, than for any, if so inclined, to have composed them. The practice therefore of such persons is upon no terms to be endured. Nor,

2. Is the contrary of it to be at all more endured in those, who cry up their mean, heavy, careless, and insipid way of handling things sacred, as the only spiritual and evangelical way of preaching, while they charge all their crude incoherences, saucy familiarities with God, and nauseous tautologies, upon the Spirit prompting such things to them, and that as the most elevated, and seraphick heights of religion. Both these sorts (as I have said) are absolutely to be exploded; and it is hard to judge, which of them deserves it most. 'Tis indeed no ways decent for a *grave matron* to be attired in the gaudy, flaunting dress of youth; but it is not
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Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 43

at all uncomely, for such an one to be cloathed in the richest, and most costly filk, if black or grave. For it is not the *richness* of the piece, but the *gaudiness* of the colour, which exposes to censure. And therefore, as I shew before that the ὄτι's, and the διότι's, the *Deus dixit*, and the *Deus benedixit*, could not be accounted wit; so neither can the whimsical cant of * *issues, products, tendencies, breathings, indwellings, rollings, recumbencies*, and scriptures misapplied, be accounted divinity. In a word, let but these new lights (so apt to teach their betters) instead of all this and the like jargon, bring us, in their discourses, strength of argument, clearness of consequence, exactness of method, and propriety of speech, and then let prejudice and party (whatsoever they may mutter against them) despise and deride them, if they can. But persons of light, undistinguishing heads, not able to carry themselves clear between extremes, think that they must either flutter (as it were) in the air, by a kind of vain empty lightness, or lie groveling upon the ground, by a dead and contemptible flatness; both the one and the other, no doubt, equally ridiculous. But after all, I cannot but believe, that it is the bewitching easiness of

* Terms often and much used by one J. O. a great leader and oracle in those times,

44 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.

the latter way of the two, which chiefly sanctifies and endears it to the practice of these men; and I hope it will not prove offensive to the auditory, if, to release it (could I be so happy) from suffering by such stuff for the future, I venture upon some short description of it; and it is briefly thus. First of all they seize upon some text, from whence they draw some thing, (which they call a *doctrine*) and well may it be said to be *drawn* from the words; forasmuch as it seldom naturally flows, or *results* from them. In the next place, being thus provided, they branch it into several heads; perhaps twenty, or thirty, or upwards. Whereupon, for the prosecution of these, they repair to some *trusty Concordance*, which never fails them, and by the help of that, they range six or seven scriptures under each head; which scriptures they prosecute one by one, first amplifying and enlarging upon one, for some considerable time, till they have spoiled it; and then that being done, they pass to another, which in its turn suffers accordingly. And these impertinent, and unpremeditated enlargements they look upon as *the motions and breathings of the spirit*, and therefore much beyond those *carnal ordinances of sense and reason*, supported by industry and study; and this they call a *saving way* of preaching, as, it must be

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Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 45

confessed to be a way to save much labour, and nothing else that I know of. But how men should thus come to make the salvation of an immortal soul such a slight, *extempore* business, I must profess I cannot understand; and would gladly understand upon whose example they ground this way of preaching; not upon that of the Apostles I am sure. For it is said of St. Paul, in his sermon before *Felix*, that he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. The words being in *Acts* xxiv. 25. διαλεγόμενος δὲ αὐτῷ, and according to the natural force and import of them, signifying, that he discoursed, or reasoned dialectically, following one conclusion with another, and with the most close and pressing arguments from the most persuasive topicks of reason and divinity. Whereupon we quickly find the prevalence of his preaching in a suitable effect, that *Felix trembled*. Whereas had Paul only cast about his arms, spoke himself hoarse, and cried, *You are damned*, though *Felix* (as guilty as he was) might have given him the hearing, yet possibly he might also have looked upon him as one whose passion had, at that time, got the start of his judgment, and accordingly have given him the same coarse salute, which the same Paul afterwards so undeservedly met with from *Festus*; but his zeal was too much

46 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

much under the conduct of his reason, to fly out at such a rate. But to pass from these indecencies to others, as little to be allowed in this sort of men; can any tolerable reason be given for those strange new postures used by some in the delivery of the word? Such as *shutting the eyes, distorting the face, and speaking through the nose*, which I think cannot so properly be called *preaching*, as *toning of a sermon*. Nor do I see, why *the word* may not be altogether as effectual for *the conversion of souls*, delivered by one, who has the manners to look his auditory in the face, using his own countenance, and his own native voice, without straining it to a lamentable and doleful *whine*, (never serving to any purpose, but where some religious cheat is to be carried on.) That ancient, though seemingly odd saying, *loquere ut te videam*, in my poor judgment, carries in it a very notable instruction, and peculiarly applicable to the persons and matter here pointed at. For, supposing one to be a very able and excellent *speaker*, yet under the fore-mentioned circumstances, he must, however, needs be *a very ill sight*; and the case of his poor suffering hearers very severe upon them, while both the *matter uttered* by him, shall grate hard *upon the ear*, and the person uttering it, at the same time *equally offend the eye*. It is clear

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 47

clear therefore, that the men of this method have sullied the noble science of divinity, and can never warrant their practice, either from religion or reason, or the rules of decent and good behaviour, nor yet from the example of the Apostles, and least of all from that of our Saviour himself. For none surely will imagine, *that these men's speaking, as never man spoke before, can pass for any imitation of him.* And here, I humbly conceive, that it may not be amiss to take occasion to utter a great truth, as both worthy to be now considered, and never to be forgot: Namely, that if we reflect upon the late times of confusion, which passed upon the ministry, we shall find, that the grand design of the fanatick crew was to persuade the world, that a standing, settled ministry, was wholly useless. This, I say, was the main point which they then drove at. And the great engine to effect this, was by engaging men of several callings (and those the meaner still the better) to hold forth, and harangue the multitude, sometimes in streets, sometimes in churches, sometimes in barns, and sometimes from pulpits, and sometimes from tubs: And in a word, wheresoever, and howsoever they could clock the senseless and unthinking rabble about them. And with this practice well followed, they (and their friends the *Jesuits*) concluded,

48 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. 1.

cluded, that in some time, it would be no hard matter to persuade the people, that if men of other professions were able to teach and preach the word, then to what purpose should there be a company of men brought up to it, and maintained in it, at the charge of a public allowance? Especially, when at the same time, the *truly godly* so greedily gaped and grasped at it *for their self-denying selves*. So that preaching, we see, was their prime engine. But now what was it, which encouraged these men to set up for a work, which (if duly managed) was so difficult in itself, and which they were never bred to? Why, no doubt it was, that low, cheap, illiterate way, then commonly used, and cried up for the only *gospel, soul-searching way*, (as the word then went) and which the craftier sort of them saw well enough, that with a little exercise, and much confidence, they might in a short time come to equal, if not exceed; as it cannot be denied, but that some few of them (with the help of a few friends *in masquerade*) accordingly did. But on the contrary, had preaching been made, and reckoned a matter of solid and true learning, of theological knowledge, and long, and severe study, (as the nature of it required it to be) assuredly, no *preaching cobbler* amongst them all, would ever have ventured *so far beyond his last,*

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed*, &c. 49

last, as to undertake it. And consequently this their most powerful engine for supplanting the church and clergy, had never been attempted, not perhaps so much as thought on: And therefore, of most singular benefit, no question, would it be to the *publick*, if those, who have *authority* to second their *advice*, would counsel the ignorant and the forward, to consider *what* divinity is, and what they themselves are, and so to put up their *preaching tools*, their *medulla's*, *note-books*, their *mellificiums*, *concordances*, and all, and betake themselves to some useful trade, which nature had most particularly fitted them for. This is what I thought fit to offer and recommend; and that not out of any humour of opposition to this or that sort of men, (for, whatsoever they may deserve, I think them below it) but out of a dutiful zeal for the advancement of what most of us profess, *divinity*; as likewise for the *honour* of that place, which we belong to, *the University*; and which of late years I have (with no small sorrow) heard often reflected upon, for the meanness of many performances in it, no ways answerable to the ancient reputation of so noble a seat of knowledge. For let the enemies of *that* and *us* say what they will, no man's *dullness* is, or can be his duty, and much less his perfection.

50 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

And thus having considered the two different, or rather contrary ways of handling the word, and most justly rejected them both, I shall now briefly give the reasons of our rejection of them; and these shall be two.

1. Because both these ways, to wit, the *light and comical*, and the *dull and heavy*, extremely expose and discredit the ordinance of preaching: And

2. Because they no less *disgrace the church* itself.

1. And first, we shall find how much both of them expose and discredit the ordinance of preaching; even that ordinance which was originally designed for the two greatest things in the world; *the honour of God*, and the *conversion of souls*. For if to convert a soul, even by the word itself, and the strongest arguments which the reason of man can bring, (as being no more than *instruments*, or rather mere *conditions* in the case) if, I say, this be reckoned a work *above nature*, (as really it is) then surely to convert one by a *jest* would be a reach beyond a *miracle*. In short, it is this unhallowed way of preaching, which turns the pulpit into a stage, and the most sovereign remedy against sin, and preservative of the soul *into the sacrifice of fools*; making it a matter of sport to the light and vain, of pity to the sober and devout, and of scorn and loathing

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Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 51

to all : And I believe never yet drew a *tear* or a *sigh* from any judicious and well-disposed auditor, unless perhaps for the sin and vanity of the speaker : So sad a thing it is, when sermons shall be such, that the most serious hearer of them shall not be able to command or keep fixed his *attention and his countenance too*. For can it be imagined excusable, or indeed tolerable, for one, who owns himself for *God's ambassador* to the people, to speak those things, as by his authority, of which it is hard to judge whether they detract from the honour or honesty of an ambassador most ? But in a word, when the professed dispensers of the weighty matters of religion shall treat them in a way so utterly unsuitable to the weight and grandeur of them, do they not come too near the infamous example of *Eli's* two sons, who managed their priestly office (as high and sacred as it was) in so wretched a manner, that it is said in 1 *Sam. ii. 27. That the people abhorred the offering of the Lord*; and if so, we may be sure, that they abhorred *the offerers* much more ?

2. As the forementioned ways of handling the word, *viz. the light and comical, and the heavy and dull*, do mightily discredit the great ordinance of preaching, so they equally discredit the church itself. It is the unhappy fate

52 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I:
of the clergy above all men, that their failures
and defects never terminate in their own per-
sons, but still rebound upon their function; a
manifest injustice certainly; where one is *the*
criminal, and another must be *the sufferer* :
But yet as bad as it is, from the practice of
some persons, *to take occasion* to reproach the
church; so on the other side, *to give occasion*,
is undoubtedly much worse. And therefore,
whatsoever relation to, or whatsoever interest
in, or affection to the church, such may, or
do pretend to; they are really greater enemies,
and fouler blots, to her excellent constitution,
than the most avowed opposers and maligners
of it; and consequently would have disoblige
her infinitely less, had they fallen in with the
schismatics and fanatics in their bitterest *in-*
vectives against her; and that even to the *re-*
nouncing her orders (as some of them have done)
and an entire quitting of her communion be-
sides; the greatest kindness that such could
possibly have done her. For better it is, to
be hissed at by a snake out of the *hedge or the*
dunghill, than to be hissed at, and bitten too by
one in one's *own bosom*. But I trust, that when
men shall seriously and impartially consider,
how, and from whence the church's enemies
have took *advantage* against her, there will be
found those whose *preaching* shall both answer

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 53

and adorn her *constitution*, and withall, make her excellent *instructions* from the *pulpit*, so to *suit*, as well as *second* her incomparable *devotions* from the *desk*, that they shall neither fly out into those levities and indecencies (so justly before condemned) on the one hand; nor yet sink into that fordid, supine dulness on the other, (which our men of the spirit so much affect to distinguish themselves by, and which we by no means desire to vie with them in.) In sum, we hope, that all our church-performances shall be such, that she shall as much out-shine all those about her, in the soundness and sobriety of her doctrines, as she surpasses them all in the primitive excellency of her discipline.

And thus having finished the first of the two general inferences from the foregoing particulars, which was for the reproof of two contrary sorts of dispensers of the word; and given reasons against them both; I shall now in the

2. Place, pass to the other and concluding inference from this whole discourse; and that shall be, to exhort and advise those who have already heard what preparations are required to a *gospel-scribe instructed to the kingdom of heaven*, and who withall design themselves for the same employment, with the utmost serious-

54 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

ness of thought to consider the high reasonableness, or rather absolute necessity of their bestowing a competent and sufficient time in the Universities for that purpose. And to dissuade such from a sudden and hasty relinquishment of them, (besides arguments, more than enough, drawn from the great inconveniencies of so doing, and the implicit prohibition of St. Paul himself, declaring, *that he who undertakes a pastoral charge, must not be a novice*;) there is still a more cogent reason for the same, and that from the very nature of the thing itself: For how (naturally speaking) can there be a fitness for any great thing or work, without preparation? And how can there be preparation, without due time and opportunity? It is observed of the *Levites*, though much of their ministry was only *shoulder-work*, that they had yet a very considerable time for preparation. They were consecrated to it, by the imposition of hands *at the age of five and twenty*; after which they employed *five years* in learning their office, and then at the *thirtieth year of their age*, they began their *levitical* ministration; at which time also our blessed Saviour began his ministry. But now under the gospel, when our work is ten times greater, (as well as twice ten times more spiritual than theirs was) do we think to furnish ourselves in half the

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 55

the space? There was lately a company of men called *tryers*, commissioned by *Cromwell*, to judge of the abilities of such as were to be admitted by them into the ministry. Who (forsooth) if any of *that* levitical age of *thirty*, presented himself to them for *their approbation*, they commonly rejected him with scorn and disdain; telling him, that if he had not been *lukewarm*, and good for nothing, he would have been disposed of in the ministry long before; and they would tell him also, that he was not only of a *legal age*, but of a *legal spirit* too; and as for things *legal*, (by which we poor mortals, and *men of the letter*, and not of the Spirit, understand things *done according to law*) this they renounced, and pretended to be many degrees above it; for otherwise we may be sure, that their great master of misrule *Oliver* would never have commissioned them to serve him in that post. And now what a kind of ministry (may we imagine) such would have stocked this poor nation with, in the space of ten years more? But the truth is, for those, whose divinity was *novelty*, it ought to be no wonder, if their divines were to be novices too; and since they intended to make their *preaching* and praying an *extemporary work*, no wonder if they were contented also with an *extemporary preparation*, and after two or

56 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Sermon. I.
three years spent in the University, ran abroad,
under a pretence of *serving God in their genera-*
tion; (a term in mighty request with them)
and that for reasons ('tis supposed) best known
to themselves. But as for such mushroom di-
vines, who start up so of a sudden, we do not
usually find their success so good, as to recom-
mend their practice. *Hasty births* are seldom
long-liv'd, but *never strong*: And therefore I
hope, that those who love the church so well,
as not to be willing that she should suffer by
any failure of theirs, will make it their business
so to stock themselves here, as to carry from
hence both learning and experience to that ar-
duous and great work, which so eminently re-
quires both. And the more inexcusable will
an over-hasty leaving this noble place of *im-*
provement be, by how much the greater en-
couragement we now have to make a longer
stay in it, than we had some years since: Pro-
vidence having broken the rod of (I believe)
as great spiritual oppression, as was ever before
exercised upon any company or corporation of
men whatsoever. When some spiritual tyrants,
then at the top and head of it, not being able
to fasten any accusation upon *mens lives*, mor-
tally maligned by them, would presently arraign
and pass sentence upon their *hearts*; and deny
them the proper encouragement and support
of

Serm. I. *The Scribe instructed, &c.* 57

of scholars, because (forsooth) they were not (in their refined sense) *godly and regenerate*; nor allowed to be *godly*, because they would not espouse a faction, by resorting to their *congregational, house-warming meetings*; where the brotherhood (or *sisterhood rather*) used to be so very kind to *their friends and brethren in the Lord*. Besides the barbarous, raving insolence, which those spiritual dons from the pulpit were wont to shew to all sorts and degrees of men, high and low; representing every casual mishap, as a judgment from God upon such and such particular persons; who being implacably hated by the party, could not (it seems) be otherwise by God himself. For * *mark the men*, said holderforth (as I myself with several others frequently heard him.) And then having thus fixed his *mark*, and taken *aim*, he would *shoot through and through* it with a vengeance. But, I hope, things are already come to that pass, that we should never again hear any, especially of our own body, in the very *face of loyalty and learning*, dare in this place (so renowned for both) either rail at majesty, or decry a standing ministry, and in a most unnatural and preposterous manner plant their

* Dr. H. W. violently thrust in canon of *Christ-church Oxon*, by the parliament-visitors, in the year 1647.

58 *The Scribe instructed, &c.* Serm. I.

batteries in the pulpit for the beating down of the church.

In fine, therefore, both to relieve your patience, and close up this whole discourse, since providence, by a wonder of mercy, has now opened a way for the return of our laws, and our religion, it will concern us all seriously to consider, that as the work before us is the greatest and most important, both with reference to this world, and the next, so likewise to remember, and lay to heart, that *this is the place of preparation, and now the time of it*: and consequently, that the more time and care shall be taken by us, to go from hence prepared for our great business, the *better* (no doubt) will be our *work*, and the larger our *reward*.

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghosts be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

PROSPERITY

Ever dangerous to

VIRTUE.

A

SERMON

ON

PROVERBS I. 32.

The Sermon, Sermon 1.

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SERMON II.

Prosperity ever dangerous to
Virtue.

PROVERBS i. 32.

*The prosperity of fools shall destroy
them.*

IT is a thing partly worth our wonder, partly our compassion, that what the greatest part of men are most passionately desirous of, that they are generally most unfit for : For they look upon things absolutely in themselves, without examining the suitableness of them to their own conditions ; and so, at a distance, court that as an enjoyment, which upon experience they find a plague, and a great calamity. And this peculiar ill property has *folly*, that it widens and enlarges mens desires, while it lessens their capacities. Like a drop-
fy,

62 *Prosperity ever dangerous* Serm. 2.

fy, which still calls for drink, but not affording strength to digest it, puts an end to the drinker, but not the thirst.

As for the explication of the text, to tell you, that in the dialect of scripture, but especially of this book of the *Proverbs*, *wicked men* are called *fools*, and *wickedness* *folly*; as on the contrary, that *piety* is still graced with the name of *wisdom*, would be as superfluous, as to attempt the proof of a self-evident and first principle, or to light a candle to the sun. By *fools* therefore are here *represented all wicked and vicious persons*. Such as turn their backs upon reason and religion, and wholly devoting themselves to sensuality, follow the sway and career of their corrupt affections.

The misery of which persons is from hence most manifest, that, when God gives them what they most love, they perish in the embraces of it, are crushed to death under heaps of gold, stifled with an overcoming plenty; like a ship fetching rich commodities from a far country, but sinking by the weight of them in its return. Since therefore wicked men are so strangely out in the calculating of their own interest; and account nothing happiness, but what brings up death and destruction in the rear of it; and since prosperity is yet, in itself, a real *blessing*, though to them it becomes a mis-

mischief, and determines in a *curse*; it concerns us to look into the reason of this strange event, and to examine how it comes to pass, *that the prosperity of fools destroys them.*

The reasons of it I conceive may be these three.

I. Because every foolish or vicious person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends and uses, for which God designs the *prosperity* of those, to whom he sends it.

II. Because *prosperity* (as the nature of man now stands) has a peculiar force and fitness to abate mens virtues, and to heighten their corruptions. And

III. And *lastly*, because it directly indisposes them to the proper means of amendment and recovery.

I. And first for the first of these, one reason why vicious persons miscarry by *prosperity*, is, *because every such person is either ignorant or regardless of the proper ends and uses for which God ordains and designs it.* Which ends are these.

1. To try and discover what is in a man. All trial is properly enquiry, and enquiry is an endeavour after the knowledge of a thing as yet unknown; and consequently in strictness

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of speech, God who knows all things, and can be ignorant of nothing, cannot be said *to try*, any more than he can be said *to enquire*. But God, while he speaks to men, is often pleased to speak after the manner of men; and the reason of this is not only his condescension to our capacities, but because in many actions God behaves himself with some analogy and proportion to the actings of men. And therefore, because God sometimes sets those things before men, that have in them a fitness to draw forth and discover what is in their heart, as inquisitive persons do, who have a mind to pry into the thoughts and actions of their neighbour, he is upon this account said *to try* or *to enquire*, though, in truth, by so doing, God designs not to inform himself, but the person whom he *tries*, and give both him and the world a view of his temper and disposition.

For the world is ignorant of men, till occasion gives them power to turn their inside outward, and to shew themselves. So that what is said of an *office*, may be also said of *prosperity*, and a *fortune*, that it does *indicare virum*, discover what the man is, and what metal his heart is made of. We see a slave perhaps cringe, and sneak, and humble himself, but do we therefore presently think, that we see his nature in his behaviour? No, we may find our-
selves

selves much mistaken ; for no body knows, in case providence should think fit to smile upon such an one, and (as it were) to launch him forth into a deep, and a wide fortune, how quickly he would be another man, assume another spirit, and grow insolent, imperious, and insufferable.

Nor is this a mystery hid only from the eyes of the world round about a man, but sometimes also even from himself; for he seldom knows his own heart so perfectly, as to be able to give a certain account of the future disposition and inclination of it, when placed under different states and conditions of life. He that has been bred poor, and grown up in a cottage, knows not how his spirits would move, and his blood rise, should he come to handle full bags, to see splendid attendances, and to eat, drink, and sleep in state. Yet no doubt, but by such great unlikely changes, as also by lower degrees of affluence and fruition, providence designs to sift, and search, and give the world some experience of the make and bent of mens minds.

But now the vicious person flies only upon the bulk and matter of the gift, and considers not that the giver has a plot and a design upon him; the consideration of which should naturally make men cautious and circumspect in

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their behaviour : For surely it is not an ordinary degree of intemperance, that would prompt a man to drink intemperately before those, who he knows, gave him his freedom, only to try whether he would use it to excess or no. God gave *Saul* a rich booty upon the conquest of *Amalek*, to try whether he would prefer real *obedience* before pretended *sacrifice*, and the performing of a *command* before *flying upon the spoil* : But his ignorance of the use, to which God design'd that prosperous event, made him let loose the reins of his folly and his covetousness, even to the blasting of his crown, and the taking the scepter from his family, 1 *Sam.* xv. 23. *Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, (said Samuel to him) he hath also rejected thee from being king* : So that this was the effect of his misunderstood success, he conquered *Amalek*, but destroyed himself.

2. The second end and design of God in giving prosperity, and of which all wicked persons are either *ignorant* or *regardless*, is to encourage them in a constant, humble expression of their gratitude to the bounty of their maker, who deals forth such rich and plentiful provisions to his undeserving creatures. God would have every temporal blessing raise that question in the heart; *Lord, what is man, that thou visitest him? or the son of man, that thou*

so

so regardest him? He never sends the pleasures of the spring, nor the plenties of harvest to surfeit, but to oblige the sons of men; and the very fruits of the *earth* are intended as arguments to carry their thoughts to *heaven*.

But the wicked and sensual part of the world are only concerned to find scope and room enough to wallow in; if they can but *have* it, whence they *have* it troubles not their thoughts; *saying grace* is no part of their *meal*; they feed and grovel like swine under an oak, filling themselves with the mast, but never so much as looking up, either to the boughs that bore, or the hands that shook it down. This is their temper and deportment in the midst of all their enjoyments. But it is far from reaching the purposes of the great governor of the world; who makes it not his care to gratify the brutishness and stupidity of evil persons. He will not be their *purveyor* only, but their *instructor* also, and see them *taught*, as well as *fed* by his liberality.

3. The third end that God gives men prosperity for, and of which wicked persons take no notice, is to make them helpful to society. No man holds the abundance of wealth, power, and honour, that heaven has blessed him with, as a *proprietor*, but as a *steward*, as the trustee of providence to use and dispense it for

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the good of those whom he converses with. For does any one think, that the divine providence concerns itself to lift him up to a station of power, only to insult and domineer over those who are round about him ; and to shew the world how able he is to do a mischief, or a shrewd turn? No, God deposits (and he does but deposit) a power in his hand to encourage virtue, and to relieve oppressed innocence ; and in a word, to act as his deputy, and as God himself would do, should he be pleased to act immediately in affairs here below.

God bids a great and rich person rise and shine, as he bids the sun ; that is, not for himself, but for the necessities of the world. And none is so honourable in his own person, as he who is helpful to others. When God makes a man wealthy and potent, he passes a double obligation upon him ; one, that he gives him riches ; the other, that he gives him an opportunity of exercising a great virtue ; for surely, if God shall be pleased to make me his almoner, and the conduit by which his goodness may descend upon my distressed neighbour ; though the charity be personally mine, yet both of us have cause to thank God for it, I that I can be *virtuous*, and he that he is *relieved*.

But

But the wicked worldly person looks no farther than himself; his *charity ends at home*, where it should *only begin*. He thinks that providence fills his purse, and his barns, only to pamper his own carcass, to invite him to take his ease and his fill, that is, to serve his base appetites with all the occasions of sin. It is not his business to *do good*, but only to *enjoy* it, and to *enjoy* it so, as to lessen it, by monopolizing and confining it. Whereupon being ignorant of the purpose, it is no wonder, if he also abuses the *bounty* of providence, and so perverts it to *his own destruction*.

II. The second general reason, *why the prosperity of fools proves destructive to them*, is, because prosperity (as the nature of man now stands) has a peculiar force and fitness to abate mens virtues, and to heighten their corruptions.

I. And first for its abating their virtues. Virtue, of any sort whatsoever, is a plant that grows upon no ground, but such an one as is frequently tilled and cultivated with the severest labour. But what a stranger is toil and labour to a great fortune? Persons possessed of this, judge themselves to have actually all that, for which labour can be rational. For men usually labour to be rich, great, and eminent: And these are born to all this, as to an inheritance. They are at the top of the hill already; so

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that while others are climbing and panting to get up, they have nothing else to do, but to lie down and sun themselves, and at their own *ease* be spectators of other mens *labours*.

But it is poverty and hardship that has made the most famed commanders, the fittest persons for business, the most expert statesmen, and the greatest philosophers. For that has first pushed them on upon the account of *necessity*, which being satisfied, they have aimed a step higher at *convenience*; and so being at length inured to a course of virtuous and generous sedulity, pleasure has continued that, which necessity first began; till their endeavours have been crowned with eminence, mastership, and perfection in the way they have been engaged in.

But would the young effeminate gallant, that never knew what it was to want his will, that every day clothes himself with the riches, and swims in the delights of the world; would he, I say, choose to rise out of his soft bed at midnight, to begin an hard and a long march, to engage in a crabbed study, or to follow some tedious perplexed business? No, he will have his servants, and the sun itself *rise before him*; when his breakfast is ready, he will make himself ready too; unless perhaps sometimes his hounds and his huntsmen break his sleep,
and

and so make him *early* in order to his being *idle*.

Hence we observe so many great families to decay and moulder away through the debauchery and sottishness of the heir : The reason of which is, that the possession of an estate does not prompt men to those severe and virtuous practices, by which it was first acquired. The grand-child perhaps comes and drinks, and whores himself out of those fair lands, manors and mansions, which his glorious ancestors had fought, or studied themselves into, which they had got by preserving their country against an invasion, by facing the enemy in the field, hungry and thirsty, early and late, by preferring a brave action before a sound sleep, though nature might never so much require it.

When the success and courage of the *Romans* had made them masters of the wealth and pleasures of all the conquered nations round about them, we see how quickly the edge of their valour was dulled, and the rigorous honesty of their morals dissolved and melted away with those delights, which too too easily circumvent and overcome the hearts of men. So that instead of the *Camilli*, the *Fabricii*, the *Scipio's*, and such like propagators of the growing greatness of the *Roman* empire, who lived

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as high things as they performed ; as soon as the bulk of it grew vast and unlimited upon the reign of *Augustus Cæsar*, we find a degenerate race of *Caligula's*, *Nero's*, and *Vitellius's* ; and of other inferior sycophants and flatterers, who neither knew nor affected any other way of making themselves considerable, but by a servile adoring of the vices and follies of great ones above them, and a base treacherous informing against virtuous and brave persons about them.

The whole business that was carried on with such noise and eagerness in that great city, then the empress of the western world, was nothing else but to build magnificently, to feed luxuriously, to frequent sports and theatres, to run *for the sportula*, and in a word, to flatter, and be flattered ; the effects of a too full and unwieldy prosperity. But surely they could not have had leisure to think upon their *Sumens*, their *Mullets* ; their *Lucrinian Oysters*, their *Phænicopters*, and the like ; they could not have made a rendezvous of all the elements at their table every day, in such a prodigious variety of meats and drinks ; they could not, I say, have thus intended these things, had the *Gauls* been besieging their *capitol*, or *Hannibal* at the head of his *Carthaginian* army *rapping at their doors* : This would quickly have turn-

ed their *spits* into *swords*; and whet their teeth too against their enemies. But when peace, ease, and plenty took away these whetstones of courage and emulation, they insensibly slid into the *Asiatick* softness, and were intent upon nothing but their *cooks*, and their ragou's, their fine attendants, and unusual habits; so that the *Roman* genius was, (as the *English* seems to be now) even lost and stifled, and the conquerors themselves transformed into the guise and garb of the conquered; till by degrees the empire shrivell'd and pined away; and from such a *surfeit* of immoderate prosperity, passed at length into a final *consumption*.

Nor is this strange, if we consider man's nature, and reflect upon the great impotence and difficulty that it finds in advancing into the ways of virtue meerly by itself, without some collateral aids and assistances; and such helps as shall smoothe the way before it, by removing all hindrances and impediments. For virtue, as it first lies in the heart of man, is but a little spark; which may indeed be blown into a flame; it has that innate force in it, that being cherished and furthered in its course, the least particle falling from a candle may climb the top of palaces, waste a city, and consume a neighbourhood. But then the suitableness of the fuel, and the wind and the air must conspire

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spire with its endeavours : This is the breath that must enliven and fan, and bear it up, till it becomes mighty and victorious. Otherwise do we think, that that little thing that falling upon thatch, or a stack of corn, prevails so marvelously, could exert its strength and its flames, its terror and its rage falling into the dew or the dust ? There it is presently checked, and left to its own little bulk to preserve itself ; which meeting with no catching matter, presently expires and dies, and becomes weak and insignificant.

In like manner let us suppose a man according to his natural frame and temper, addicted to modesty and temperance, to virtuous and sober courses. Here is indeed something improvable into a bright and a noble perfection ; nature has kindled the spark, sown the seed, and we see the rude draught, and first lineaments of a *Joseph*, a *Cato*, or a *Fabricius*. But now has this little *embryo* strength enough to thrust itself into the world ? To hold up its head, and to maintain its course to a perfect maturity, against all the assaults and batteries of intemperance ; all the snares and trepans that common life lays in its way to extinguish and suppress it ? Can it abstain in the midst of all the importunities and opportunities of sensuality without being confirmed and disciplined by

by long hardships, severe abridgments, and the rules of virtue frequently inculcated, and carefully pressed? No, we shall quickly find those hopeful beginnings dashed and swallowed by such ruining delights. Prosperity is but a bad nurse to virtue; a nurse which is like to starve it in its infancy, and to spoil it in its growth.

I come now in the next place to shew, that as it has such an aptness to lessen and abate virtue, so it has a peculiar force also to heighten and enflame mens corruptions.

Nothing shall more effectually betray the heart into a love of sin, and a loathing of holiness, than an ill-managed prosperity. It is like some meats, the more luscious, so much the more dangerous. Prosperity and ease upon an unsanctified, impure heart, is like the sunbeams upon a dunghill, it raises many filthy, noisome exhalations. The same soldiers, who in hard service, and in the battle, are in perfect subjection to their leaders, in peace and luxury are apt to mutiny and rebel. That corrupt affection which has lain, as it were, dead and frozen in the midst of distracting businesses, or under adversity, when the sun of prosperity has shined upon it, then, like a snake, it presently recovers its former strength and venom. Vice must be caressed and smiled upon, that it may thrive and sting. It is starved

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ved by poverty : It droops under the frowns of fortune, and pines away upon bread and water. But when the channels of plenty run high, and every appetite is plied with abundance and variety, so that *satisfaction* is but a mean word to express its enjoyment ; then the inbred corruption of the heart shews itself pampered and insolent, too unruly for discipline, and too big for correction.

Which will appear the better, by considering those vices, which more particularly receive improvement by prosperity.

I. And the first is *pride*. Who almost is there, whose heart does not *swell* with his *bag* ? And whose thoughts do not follow the proportions of his condition ? What difference has been seen in the same man poor and preferred ? His mind, like a mushroom, has shot up in a night. His business is first to forget himself, and then his friends. When the sun shines, then the peacock displays his train.

We know when *Hezekiah's* treasuries were full, his armories replenished, and the pomp of his court rich and splendid, how his heart was lifted up, and what vaunts he made of all to the *Babylonish* ambassadors, *Isa.* xxix. 2. Though in the end, as most proud fools do, he smarted for his ostentation. See *Nebuchadnezzar* also strutting himself upon the survey
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of that mass of riches, and settled grandeur, that providence had blessed his court with. It swelled his heart, till it broke out at his mouth in that rodomontade, *Dan. iv. 30. Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the glory of my majesty?* Now, that prosperity, by fomenting a man's pride, lays a certain train for his ruin, will easily be acknowledged by him, who either from scripture or experience shall learn what a spite providence constantly owes the *proud person*. He is the very eye-sore of heaven; and God even looks upon his own supremacy as concerned to abase him.

2. Another sin that is apt to receive increase and growth from prosperity, is luxury and uncleanness. *Sodom* was a place *watered like the garden of God*, *Gen. xiii. 10. There was in it fulness of bread*, *Ezek. xvi. 49.* and a redundant fruition of all things. This was the condition of *Sodom*, and what the sin of it was, and the dismal consequence of that sin, is too well known. The *Israelites* committing fornication with the daughters of *Moab*, which reaped down so many thousands of them at once, was introduced with feasting and dancing, and all the gaieties and festivities of a prosperous, triumphing people. We read of nothing like adultery in a persecuted *David* in the wilderness; he

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he fled here and there like a chaste roe upon the mountains; but when the delicacies of the court softened and ungirt his spirit, when he drowfed upon his couch, and sunned himself upon the leads of his palace; then it was that this great hero fell by a glance, and buried his glories in his neighbour's bed; gaining to his name a lasting slur, and to his conscience a fearful wound.

As *Solomon* says of a man surprized with surfeit and intemperance, we may say of every foolish man immersed in prosperity, *that his eyes shall look upon strange women, and his heart shall utter perverse things.* 'Tis a tempting thing for the fool to be gadding abroad in a fair day. But *Dinah* knows not, but the snare may be laid for her, and she return with a rape upon her honour, baffled and deflowered, and robbed of the crown of her virginity. *Lot's* daughters revelled and banqueted their father into incest.

The unclean devil haunts the families of the rich, the gallant, and the high livers; and there is nothing but the wisdom from above which descends upon strict, humble, and praying persons, that can preserve the soul pure and sound in the killing neighbourhood of such a contagion.

3. A third sin that prosperity inclines the corrupt heart of man to, is great prophaneness, and neglect of God in the duties of religion. Those who lie soft and warm in a rich estate, seldom come to heat themselves at the altar. It is a poor fervour that arises from devotion, in comparison of that which sparkles from the generous draughts, and the festival fare which attend the tables of the wealthy and the great. Such men are (as they think) so happy, that they have no leisure to be holy. They look upon prayer as the work of the poor and the solitary, and such as have nothing to spend but their time and themselves. If *Jesu-run* wax fat, it is ten to one but he will kick against him who made him so.

And now, I suppose, a reflection upon the premises cannot but press every serious person with a consideration of the ticklish estate he stands in, while the favours of providence are pleas'd to breathe upon him in these gentle gales. No man is wholly out of the danger which we have been discoursing of: For every man has so much of folly in him, as he has of sin; and therefore he must know, that his foot is not so steady, but it may slip and slide in the oily paths of prosperity.

The treachery and weakness of his own heart may betray and insensibly bewitch him
2 into

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into the love and liking of a fawning vice. What the prophet says of *wine* and *musick*, may be also said of prosperity, whose intoxications are not at all less, that it *steals away the heart*. The man shall find that his heart is *gone*, though he perceives not *when it goes*.

And the reason of all this is, because it is natural for the soul in time of prosperity to be more careless and unbent; and consequently not keeping so narrow a watch over itself, is more exposed to the invasions and arts of its industrious enemy. Upon which account, the wise and the cautious will look upon the most promising season of prosperity with a doubtful and a suspicious eye; as bewaring, lest while it offers a kiss to the lips, it brings a javelin for the side; many hearts have been thus *melted*, that could never have been *broke*. This also may be a full, though a sad argument to allay the foolish envy, with which some are apt to look upon men of great and flourishing estates at a distance: For how do they know, that what they make the object of their envy, is not a fitter object for their pity? And that this glistening person so much admired by them, is not now a preparing for his ruin, and fattening for the slaughters of eternity? That he does not eat his bane, and carouse his poison? The poor man perhaps is cursed into all his greatness

ness and prosperity. Providence has put it as a sword into his hand, for the wounding and destroying of his own soul: For he knows not how to use any of these things; and so has only this advantage, that he is damned in state, and goes to hell with more ease, more flourish, and magnificent than other men.

And thus much for the second general reason, why the prosperity of fools proves fatal and destructive to them. I come now to the third and last, which is, because prosperity directly *indisposes men to the proper means of their amendment and recovery.*

1. As first, it renders them utterly averse from receiving counsel and admonition, *Jer. xxii. 21. I spake to thee in thy prosperity, and thou saidst I will not hear.* The ear is wanton and ungoverned, and the heart insolent and obdurate, till one is pierced, and the other made tender by affliction. Prosperity leaves a kind of dulness and lethargy upon the spirits; so that the still voice of God will not awaken a man, but he must thunder and lighten about his ears, before he will be brought to take notice that God speaks to him. All the divine threatenings and reprehensions beat upon such an one but as stubble upon a brass-wall; the man and his vice stand firm, unshaken, and unconcerned; he presumes that the course of his affairs

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will proceed always as it does, smoothly, and without interruption; *that to-morrow will be as to-day, and much more abundant.* It is natural for men in a prosperous condition neither to love nor suspect a change.

But besides, prosperity does not only shut the ear against counsel, by reason of the dullness that it leaves upon the senses; but also upon the account of that arrogance, and untutor'd haughtiness that it brings upon the mind; which of all other qualities chiefly stops the entrance of advice, *by making* a man look upon himself as too great, and too wise, to admit of the assistances of another's wisdom. The richest man will still think himself the wisest man. And where there is fortune, there needs no advice.

2. Much prosperity utterly unfits such persons for the sharp trials of adversity: Which yet God uses as the most proper and sovereign means to correct and reduce a soul grown vain and extravagant, by a long, uninterrupted felicity. But an un sanctified, unregenerate person, passing into so great an alteration of estate, is like a man in a sweat entering into a river, or throwing himself into the snow; he is presently struck to the heart; he languishes, and meets with certain death in the change. His heart is too effeminate and weak to contest with want and hardship, and the killing misery of
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having been happy heretofore. For in this condition, he certainly mis-behaves himself one of these two ways.

1. He either faints and desponds, and parts with his hope together with his possessions. He has neither confidence in providence, nor substance in himself, to bear him out, and buoy up his sinking spirit, when storms and showers of an adverse fortune shall descend, and beat upon him, and shake in pieces the pitiful fabrick of his earthly comforts. The earth he treads upon, is his sole joy and inheritance; and that which supports his feet, must support his heart also; otherwise he cannot, like *Job*, rest upon that providence that places him upon a dunghill.

2. Such a person, if he does not faint and sink in adversity, then on the contrary he will murmur and tumultuate, and blaspheme the God that afflicts him. A bold and a stubborn spirit naturally throws out its malignity this way. It will make a man die cursing and raving, and even breathe his last in a blasphemy. No man knows how high the corruption of some natures will work and foam, being provoked and exasperated by affliction.

Having thus shewn the reasons why prosperity becomes destructive to some persons; surely it is now but rational, in some brief direc-

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tions, to shew how it may become otherwise; and that is, in one word, by altering the quality of the subject. Prosperity, I shew'd, was destructive to *fools*; and therefore, the only way for a man not to find it destructive, is for him not to be a *fool*; and this he may avoid by a pious observance of these following rules. As

1. Let him seriously consider upon what weak hinges his prosperity and felicity hangs. Perhaps the cross falling of a little accident, the omission of a ceremony, or the misplacing of a circumstance, may determine all his fortunes for ever. Or perhaps his whole interest, his possessions, and his hopes too, may live by the breath of another, who may breathe his last to-morrow. And shall a man forget God and eternity for that which cannot secure him the reversion of a day's happiness? Can any favourite bear himself high and insolent upon the stock of the largest fortune imaginable, who has read the story of *Wolsey* or *Sejanus*? Not only the *death*, but the *humour* of his prince or patron may divest him of all his glories, and send him stripp'd and naked to his long rest. *How* quickly is the sun overcast, and how often does he set in a cloud, and that cloud break in a storm! He that well considers this, will account it a surer livelihood to depend upon the

sweat

sweat of his own *brow* than the *favour* of another man's. And even while it is his fortune to enjoy it, he will be far from confidence; confidence which is the downfall of a man's happiness, and a traitor to him in all his concerns; for still it is the confident person who is deceived.

2. Let a man consider, how little he is bettered by prosperity as to those perfections which are chiefly valuable. All the wealth of both the *Indies* cannot add one cubit to the stature either of his body or his mind. It can neither better his health, advance his intellectuals, or refine his morals. We see those languish and die, who command the physick and physicians of a whole kingdom. And some are dunces in the midst of libraries, dull and sottish in the very bosom of *Athens*; and far from wisdom, though they lord it over the wise.

For does he, who was once both poor and ignorant, find his notions or his manners any thing improved, because perhaps his friend or father died, and left him rich? Did his ignorance expire with the other's life? Or does he understand one proposition in philosophy, one mystery in his profession at all the more, for his keeping a bailiff or a steward? As great and as good a landlord as he is, may he not for all this have an *empty room* yet to let?

86 *Prosperity ever dangerous* Serm. 2.

And that such an one is like to continue empty upon his hands (or rather head) for ever? If so, surely then none has cause to value himself upon that, which is equally incident to the worst and weakest of men.

3. And *lastly*. Let a man correct the gaieties and wandrings of his spirit, by the severe duties of mortification. Let him (as *David* says) *minge his drink with weeping*, and dash his wine with such water. Let him effect that upon himself by fasting and abstinence, which God would bring others to by penury and want. And by so doing, he shall disenslave and redeem his soul from a captivity to the things he enjoys, and so make himself *lord* as well as *possessor* of what he has. For repentance supplies the discipline of adversity; and abstinence makes affliction needless, by really compassing the design of it upon the nobler account of choice: The scarceness of some meals will sanctify the plenty of others. And they are the *Quadragesimal fasts* which fit both body and soul for the *festivals* of *Easter*.

The wisest persons in the world have often abridged themselves in the midst of their greatest affluence; and given bounds, to their appetites, while they felt none in their fortunes. And that Prince who wore sackcloth under his purple, wore the livery of virtue, as well as the

the badge of sovereignty ; and was resolved to be *good*, in spite of all his *greatness*.

Many other considerations may be added, and these farther improved. But to sum up all in short ; since *folly is so bound up in the heart of man*, and since the *fool* in his *best*, that is, in his *most prosperous* condition, stands tottering upon the very brink of destruction, surely the great use of the whole foregoing discourse should be to remind us in all our prayers, not so much to solicit God for any temporal enjoyment, as for an *heart* that may *fit* us for it ; and that God would be the *chooser*, as well as the *giver* of our portion in this world ; who alone is able to suit and sanctify our *condition to us*, and *us to our condition*.

To whom therefore be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore.

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SHAMELESSNESS in SIN,

The certain Forerunner of

DESTRUCTION:

A

S E R M O N

O N

JEREMIAH vi. 15.

SHAMBERS IN 512

THE NEW YORK

DESTRUCTION

S. E. R. M. O. N.

ON
THE

SERMON III.

Shamefulness in sin, the certain
forerunner of destruction:

JEREMIAH vi. 15.

*Were they ashamed, when they had
committed abomination? Nay, they
were not at all ashamed, neither
could they blush; therefore they shall
fall amongst them that fall; at the
time that I visit them, they shall be
cast down, saith the Lord.*

HE, who after the commission of great
sins, can look God, his conscience,
and the world in the face, *without
blushing*, gives a shrewd and sad demonstration,
that he is too far gone in the ways of sin and
death,

92 *Shamelesnefs in Sin, the* Serm. 3.

death, to be reclaimed to God, or recovered to himself, without a miracle. For having lost not only the substance of virtue, but the very colour of it too, (as the Philosopher called *blusbing*) and the principles of morality having upon the same account lost all hold of him; he now seems to claim a place in the highest rank of sinners; and from the condition of the actually disobedient, and (as yet) impenitent, to have passed into the unspeakably worse estate of the *desperate* and *incurable*. For though Almighty God is very free and forward in the addressses of his grace to the souls of men, yet still there must be something in them *for grace to work upon*; to wit, something of *natural spiritual sense and tenderness*; which if once extinct and gone, (as they may be, and God knows too often are) the spirit of God will find nothing in such a soul to entertain its *motions*, or receive its *impressions*; but the man having *sinned himself past all feeling*, may, I fear, be but too justly supposed to have *sinned himself past grace too*.

And such a sort of sinners seems the prophet to encounter all along this chapter. A pack of wretches harden'd and confirmed in their sins; daring God, and defying his laws; with one foot (as it were) trampling upon *natural conscience*, and with the other upon *religion*:
Wretches,

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 93

Wretches who by shaking off all shame and modesty, (the first and kindest results of common humanity) seem even to have finned themselves into another *kind of species*: While the very *shamefulness* of the sins they committed, utterly took away all *shame* from the committers of them; and the guilt, which should have covered and confounded their faces with *blushing*, was the very cause *that they could not blush*.

Which short account and description of the enormous impiety of the persons here pointed at in the text, being thus premised, let us now proceed to the consideration of the words themselves, wherein we have these four things observable.

First, The guilt of some extraordinary, crying sins, charged upon the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, in these words: *They had committed abomination*. An expression importing some superlative sort of villany acted by them, whatsoever it might be.

Secondly, Their deportment under this guilt: *They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush*.

Thirdly, God's high resentment of the monstrousness of such a shameless carriage, implied

ed

94 *Shamelesness in Sin, the* Serm. 3.
ed in that vehement interrogatory exclamation,
were they ashamed?

Fourthly and lastly, The judgment consequent hereupon in the concluding words of the text, *therefore they shall fall amongst them that fall, &c.*

These particulars I shall not prosecute in that order and distinction in which they have been laid down, but shall gather the entire sense and drift of them into this one proposition, which I intend for the subject of the following discourse; namely,

That shamelesness in sin is the certain forerunner of destruction.

The prosecution of which proposition I shall manage under these particular heads.

1. I shall shew, *what shame is*, and the influence it has upon the government of mens manners.

2. I shall shew, by what ways men come to cast off shame, and to grow impudent in sin.

3. I shall shew, the several degrees of shamelesness in sin.

4. I shall shew, *the reasons why it so remarkably and effectually brings down judgment and destruction upon the sinner*: And

5. And

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 95

5. And *lastly*, I shall shew, *what those judgments most commonly are*, by which it procures the sinner's ruin and destruction. Of all which in their order : And

1. For the first of them. *What shame is, and what influence it has upon the government of mens manners.* In order to which, if we consider the natural frame of man's mind, and the ways and methods by which the divine wisdom governs the affairs of the world, we shall find none more effectual to this great end, than the contrariety of *passions* and *affections* planted by God in the heart of man ; which though in themselves most eager and impetuous, and such as are wholly unable to prescribe either rule or *measure* to their own operations, yet in the whole œconomy of them, are disposed with such admirable equality, that the vehemence of one passion is still matched and balanced with the force of another. It is evident from reason, and too sad an experience, that *desire, anger, hatred*, and the like passions, are of that fury and transport in their egress to, and actings about their respective objects, that the greatest disturbances in the world spring from thence, and would, no doubt, from disturbance pass into confusion, were there not such passions as *sorrow, fear, and shame*, to obviate
and

96 *Shamefulness in Sin, the Serm. 3.*

and controul them in their excess: So that these are (as it were) the shores and bounds which providence has set in the soul of man, to check, and to give laws to the overflowings of those contrary affections, which would otherwise bear down all before them, and drive all peace and order out of the world. This I thought fit to remark of the passions in general.

And now for the passion of *shame* in particular, to shew what that is, and wherein it does consist. I conceive this may be a full account of the nature of it, viz. *That it is a grief of mind springing from the apprehension of some disgrace brought upon a man.* And disgrace consists properly in mens knowledge or opinion of some defect natural or moral belonging to them. So that when a man is sensible that any thing defective or amiss, either in his person, manners, or the circumstances of his condition, is known, or taken notice of by others; from this sense or apprehension of his, there naturally results upon his mind a certain grief or displeasure; which grief properly constitutes the passion of *shame*. So that *shame* presupposes in the mind these two things.

1. A great esteem and value of every thing belonging to the due perfection of a man's being. And

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 97

2. An earnest desire of other mens knowledge or opinion of this perfection, as possessed by him.

And consequently, as *glory* is the joy a man conceives from his own *perfections*, considered with relation to the opinion of others, as observed and acknowledged by them; so *shame* is the *grief* a man conceives from his own imperfections, considered with relation to the opinion of the world taking notice of them; and in one word, may be defined *grief upon the sense of disesteem*. And there is not in the whole mind of man a passion of a quicker, and more tender sense, and which receives a deeper and a keener impression from its object, than this of *shame*: Which in my judgment affords a stronger argument to prove a man a creature naturally designed for *society* and conversation, than any that are usually produced for that purpose. For were not every man conscious to himself of his desire and need of the benefits of conversation, why should he be so solicitous to approve himself to the good opinion of others? And with so much sorrow and impatience regret other mens knowledge of any imperfection belonging to him? Which yet he himself could quietly enough brook the knowledge of so long as it lay confined within his own breast, and heartily love *himself*

with all his faults. And as the nature of this passion argues a man disposed to society, so when we consider that amongst the *objects* of this passion, those imperfections, which relate to a man's actions and manners, hold the prime place; so that a man is more ashamed to be accounted a dishonest, or unjust, than a weak or an unfortunate man; it is evident from hence, that the apprehensions and resentments of the turpitude and dishonesty of our actions, are founded upon something born into the world with us, and spring originally from the first and most native discourses of the soul about its own actions.

Now from this, that *shame* is grounded upon the *dread* man naturally has of the ill opinion of others, and that chiefly with reference to the *turpitude or immorality of his actions*, it is manifest, that it is that great and powerful instrument in the soul of man, whereby providence both preserves society, and supports government; forasmuch as it is the most effectual restraint upon him from the doing of such things as more immediately tend to disturb the one, and destroy the other. It is indeed more effectual than bare law, and that upon a double account:

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 99

1. Of the nature of the evil threatned by it: And

2. Of the largeness of its extent.

1. And first for the *evil threatned*. Where-
as the law directly threatens pains of the body,
or mutilation of limbs to the delinquent: *Shame* threatens *disgrace*; which above all other
things is properly the torment of the soul, and
(considering the innate generosity of man's
mind disposing him to prefer a *good name* be-
fore life itself) is much more grievous and in-
supportable to him, than those other inflictions.
So that in that *grand exemplar* of suffering, even
our Saviour himself, *his enduring the cross*, is
heightened, and set off by *his despising the*
shame, as that which far surpassed all the cru-
elties of the rods, the nails, and the spear, and,
upon the truest estimate of pain, much the
bitterer passion of the two. And from hence
also it is, that no penal laws are found so forci-
ble for the controul of vice, as those wherein
shame makes the chief ingredient of the penal-
ty. Death at the block looks not so grim and
dismal as death at the gibbet; for here it meets
a man clad with infamy and reproach, which
does a more grievous execution upon his mind,
than the other can upon his body. Nay,
wounds, and pain, and death itself, from *ter-*
rible;

rible, sometimes become *contemptible*, where they are looked upon but as a passage to *honour*; and many are easily brought to write their names with their own *blood* in the records of fame and immortality. So that the *sting of death* here, is *shame*; and the matter of the sharpest punishment, stripped of all reproach and ignominy, is so far from overwhelming the mind with horror and consternation, that in many circumstances it is capable of being reconciled even to nature itself, and that in such a degree, that instead of being submitted to, barely upon the stock of *patience*, it may be made the object of a rational *choice*. But

2. As to the other advantage, which sense of *shame* has above the law; to wit, that it extends itself to more objects than the law does, and consequently restrains and prevents more evil than the law can: It is to be observed, that whereas the laws of men in punishing the transgressors of them, take notice only of such gross enormities as directly tend to make a breach upon government and overthrow society; the sense of *shame* on the other side, reaches likewise to all indecencies, and not only to such things, as shake the *being*, but to such also as impair the beauties and ornaments of a society: And by that means guards the behaviour

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 101

viour of men, even against the first approach, and indeed the very shew and semblance of immorality. Such a sovereign influence has this passion upon the regulation of the lives and actions of men; indeed so sovereign, and so great, that a *society* set up purposely for the *reformation of manners* (God bless it) can hardly have a greater.

And no wonder, if we consider the unaccountable force of it in those strange effects it has sometimes had upon men. Some have been struck with phrenzy and distraction, and some with death itself upon the sudden attack of an intolerable confounding *shame*: The sense of which had at once bereaved them of all their other senses, and they have given up the *ghost* and their *credit* together. Take one of the greatest and most approved courage, who makes nothing to look death and danger in the face, who can laugh at the glittering of swords, the clashing of armour, and the hissing of bullets, with all the other terrors of war. Take, I say, such an one in a base and a shameful action; and the eye of the discoverer, like that of the Basilisk, *shall look him dead*. So that in such a surprize, *he who is valiant, and whose heart is as the heart of a lion*, shall utterly sink and melt away. *Shame* shall fly like a poisoned arrow into his heart, and strike *like a dart* through

"a liver. So inexpressibly great sometimes are the killing horrors of this passion.

And as it has sometimes these prodigious effects upon surprize, so is it of a malignity not at all less fatal, when it so fastens upon the soul, as to consume and waste it with the continual gnawings of a lingring and habitual grief. He whom shame has done its worst upon, is, *ipso facto*, stripped of all the common comforts of life. Every eye that sees him wounds him, and he thinks he reads his *destiny* in the forehead of every one who beholds him. The *light* is to him the *shadow of death*; he has no heart, nor appetite to business; nay, his very food is nauseous to him, and his daily repast no refreshment. It is his mind only which feeds heartily upon his *body*, and the vultur within which preys upon his stomach. In which wretched condition having passed some years, first the vigour of his intellectuals begins to flag and dwindle away, and then his health follows: The hectick of the soul produces one in the body; the man from an *inward* falls into an *outward* consumption; and death at length gives the finishing stroke, and closes all with a sad catastrophe. This is the natural progress of this cruel passion.

And thus much for the *first thing* proposed; which was to shew, *what shame is, and what influence*

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influence it has upon the government of mens manners. I proceed now to the

2. Which is to shew, *by what ways men come to cast off shame, and grow impudent in sin.* Concerning which, we must first of all observe, that the principles of shame and modesty are too deeply rooted in man's nature to be easily plucked out; which makes the loss of them (wheresoever they come to be lost) so extremely sinful: Shamelessness in sin, being a thing perfectly *unnatural*, and (if a man could lose his nature as well as his virtue) a deviation even from humanity itself. Nevertheless the frailty and mutability of nature is such, that it is capable of being debauched even in its first, and best notions, and of growing into such a change of inclination, as to become quite another thing from what God at first made it. But how, and by what means this comes to be effected, is the subject of our present enquiry; and to give some general account of this, we must know, that by whatsoever ways or courses men are brought to cast off that natural tenderness, and sensibility of mind, which renders them apprehensive of any thing done unsuitably to their nature, by those properly is this passion of *shame* first lessened, and at length totally extinguished. Now that may be done several ways.

1. By the commission of great sins. For these waste the conscience, and *destroy* at once. They are (as it were) *a course of wickedness* a-bridg'd into *one act*; and a custom of sinning by *equivalence*. Lesser sins indeed do by degrees fully and change the habit of the soul; but these transform it in a minute: as in the complection of a man's face, he grows tanned and swarthy by little and little; but if a blast comes, that gives him another face and hue in the twinkling of an eye. Sins of daily incursion insensibly wear away the innate tenderness of the conscience; but *whoredoms, murders, and perjuries*, (though never so much sanctified) and the like, tear and break it off presently. Nor does this contradict the assertion just now premised by us, concerning the difficult removal of shame and modesty. For when a thing falls by a very great blow, though it fall *quickly*, it cannot be said to fall *easily*. Besides that nature can hardly pass from its first innocence and modesty, to the commission of a great crime, but by many intermediate preparatives of sin; unless it should chance to be strangely seized, and (as it were) ravished by some fierce and horrid temptation. But this very rarely happens: And therefore, though great sins do usually expell *shame at once*, yet people seldom rush into great sins *at first*. All that

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that we insist upon in the present case, is, that upon what account soever such sins come actually to be committed, they make a mighty breach and invasion upon the soul, and shame seldom long survives the commission of them. They steel the forehead, and harden the heart, and break those bars asunder, which modesty had originally fenced and enclosed it with. In *Jeremy iii. 3.* *Thou hast a whore's forehead, (said the prophet to Jerusalem) and refusest to be ashamed.* A whore's life naturally produces a whore's forehead. Scandalous and flagitious actions superinduce new hardnesse, and confidences, which nature of itself would never have reached to. For upon every great sin, the spirit of God proportionably withdraws his presence from the soul, and, together with it, that influence, by which alone the principles of modesty, and the awe of virtue and goodness, are kept alive and fresh upon the mind. And when the soul is once rified of these, and has lost the honour of its virgin-purity, by a foul action, it is left naked and unguarded, and open to all the assaults of its grand enemy; who, if he can go on in his attempts with any tolerable success, will be sure never to give over, till having quite razed all sense of shame and remorse out of the sinner's heart, he at length confirms, and seals him up in a state of sin
and

and death. And this he knows is both effectually and compendiously done by sins of a peculiar and more than ordinary guilt, which no sooner enter into the soul, but he also enters with them, and so driving out all shame before him, takes full *livery* and *seizin* of it, and keeps firm and quiet possession of the man to his dying day.

2. *Custom in sinning* never fails in the issue to take away the sense and shame of sin, were a person never so virtuous before. For albeit the object of *shame* still carries with it something strange, new, and unusual, yet the *strangeness* of any thing wears off with the *frequency* of its practice. This makes it familiar to the mind, and being so, the mind is never startled, or moved at it. By *great sins* (as we have shewn) the soul casts off shame, all on a sudden; but by *customary sinning* it lays it down leisurely, and by degrees. And no man proceeding in such a course or method, arrives presently at the top of any vice; but holding on a continual, steady progress in the paths of sin, passes at length into a forlorn, shameless condition, by such steps as these. First, he begins to shake off the natural horror and dread which he had of breaking any of God's commands, and so *not to fear sin*: In the next place, finding his sinful appetites gratified by such
breaches

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 107

breaches of the divine law, he comes thereupon *to like his sin*, and to be pleased with what he has done ; and then, from ordinary complacencies, heightened and improved by custom, he comes passionately *to delight in such ways*. And thus, being captivated with delight, he resolves to continue and persist in them ; which since he can hardly do without incurring the censure and ill opinion of the world, he frames himself to a resolute contempt of whatsoever is either *thought* or *said* of him ; and so having hereby done violence to those apprehensions of modesty, which nature had placed as guardians and overseers to his virtue, he flings off all shame, wears his sin upon his forehead, looks boldly with it, and so at *length commences* a fixed, thorough-paced, and complete sinner.

3. The examples of *great persons* take away the shame of any thing which they are observed to *practise*, though never so foul and shameful in itself. Every such person stamps a kind of *authority* upon what he does ; and the examples of *superiors*, (and much more of *sovereigns*) are both a *rule* and an *encouragement* to their *inferiors*. The action is seldom *abhorred*, where the agent is *admired* ; and the *filth* of one is hardly taken notice of, where the *lustre* of the other *dazzles* the beholder. Nothing is, or can be more contagious, than an
ill

ill action set off with a *great example*: For it is natural for men to imitate those above them, and to endeavour to *resemble* (at least) that, which they *cannot be*. And therefore, whatsoever they see such grandees do, quickly becomes current and creditable, it passes *cum privilegio*; and no man blushes at the imitation of a *scarlet*, or a *purple* finner, though the fin be so too.

It is, in good earnest, a sad consideration to reflect upon that intolerable weight of guilt, which attends the vices of great and eminent offenders. Every one (God knows) has guilt enough from his own personal sins, to consign him over to eternal misery; but when God shall charge the death of so many souls upon one man's account, and tell him at the great day, this man had *his drunkenness* from thee, that man owes *his uncleanness* to thy example; another was at first modest, bashful, and tender, till thy practice, enforced by the greatness of thy *place* and *person*, conquered all those reluctancies, and brought him in the end to be *shameless* and *insensible*, of a *prostitute* conscience, and a *reprobate* mind. When God, I say, shall reckon all this to the score of a great, illustrious, and exemplary finner, over and above his own personal guilt, how unspeakably greater a doom must needs pass upon him for other mens
sins,

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 109

kins, than could have done only for his own! The sins of all about him are really his sins, as being committed in the strength of that which they had seen him do. Wherein, though his action was *personal* and particular, yet *his influence was universal*.

4. The *observation of the general and common practice* of any thing, takes away the shame of that practice. Better *be out of the world*, than *not be like the world*, is the language of most hearts. The commonness of a practice turns it into a *fashion*, and few (we know) are ashamed to *follow that*. A vice *a-la-mode* will look virtue itself *out of countenance*, and it is well if it does not look it *out of heart too*. Men love not to be found singular, especially where the singularity lies in the rugged and severe paths of virtue. Company causes *confidence*, and multitude gives both *credit and defence*, credit to the crime, and defence to the criminal. The fearfullest and the basest creatures, got into herds and flocks, become bold and daring: And the modestest natures, hardened by the fellowship and concurrence of others in the same vicious course, grow into another frame of spirit; and in a short time lose all apprehension of the indecency and foulness of that, which they have so familiarly, and so long conversed with. Impudence fights with and by num-

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ber, and by multitude becomes victorious. For
no man is ashamed to look his fellow thief or
drunkard in the face, or to own a rebellious de-
sign in the head of a rebel-army.

And we see every day, what a degree of
shamefulness the common practice of some sins
amongst us has brought the generality of the
nation to; so that persons of that sex, whose pro-
per ornament should be *bashfulness and modesty*,
are grown bold and forward, offer themselves
into company, and even *invite* those addressees,
which the severity of former times would have
scorned to *admit*. From the retirements of the
closet, they are come to brave it in theatres
and taverns; where virtue and modesty are
drunk down, and *honour left behind to pay the*
reckoning. And now ask such persons with
what face they can assume such unbecoming
liberties; and they shall answer you, that it is
the *mode*, the *gallantry*, and the *genteel freedom*
of the present age, which has redeemed itself
from the pitiful pedantry, and absurd scrupu-
losity of former times, in which those bugbears
of *credit* and *conscience* spoiled all the *pleasure*,
the *air*, and *fineness* of conversation. This is
all the account you shall have from them; and
thus, when common practice has vouched for
an ill thing, and called it by a plausible name;
the *credit of the world* shall take away the *shame*
of

Serm. 3. *Forerunner of Destruction.* 111

of the thing : Vice grows triumphant ; and knowing itself to be in its full glory, scorns to fly to corners or concealments, but loves to be seen and gazed upon, and has thrown off the *mask* or *vizard* as an useleſs, unfashionable thing. This, I ſay, is the guiſe of our age, our *free* thinking, and *freer* practiſing age, in which people generally are aſhamed of nothing, but to *be virtuous*, and to be *thought old*.

5thly, And *laſtly*. I ſhall mention one thing more, which renders men ſhameleſs ; and that is, to have been *once greatly and irrecoverably aſhamed*. For ſhame is never of any force, but where there is ſome ſtock of credit to be preſerved. But when a man finds that to be loſt, and the recovery of it deſperate and impoſſible ; he lets looſe his appetites to their full ſwing, and no longer *fears that* which he reckons has done *its worſt* upon him already. He is like an undone gameſter, who plays on ſafely, knowing that he can loſe no more.

And for this cauſe, many wiſe governors having had the utmoſt advantage againſt ſome delinquents upon this account, yet if they were ſuch as were capable of being either uſeful or dangerous to the publick, have thought it unſafe to *diſgrace them totally*. For in this caſe government can have no hold of them, by one
of

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of the strongest ties in nature, *viz.* a regard of their credit and reputation. Set a man once in the pillory, and see whether ever after his credit can keep him from playing the knave, if his interest prompts him to it: The man has now looked shame in the face; and looked it out of countenance too; he has *swallowed* down scorn, and *digested* it. His reputation is forlorn and gone; and he knows that a *good name once dead has no resurrection.*

And thus I have done with the second thing proposed; which was to shew, by what ways men come to cast off shame, and to grow *impudent in sin.* I proceed now to the

Third, Which is to shew, the several degrees of shamefulness in sin.

I shall not pretend to recount them all, but only mention three of the most notorious:
As

i. A shewing of *the greatest respect*, and making the most obsequious applications and addresses to lewd and infamous persons; and that without any pretence of duty requiring it, which yet alone can justify and excuse men in it. For 'tis confessed, that no vice can warrant the least failure of respect to *our parents* or *governors*, be they never so bad; since in truth, all respect shewn to these, does not so much fall upon the persons to whom it is directed,

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rected, as redound upon the divine law, by which it is commanded. But when people voluntarily make their visits to persons living in open and avowed wickedness, affect to be of their retinue, and their acquaintance, and dependence, treat them, and speak honourably and affectionately of them, this is really and properly to vouch for and to abet their crime; which, duly considered, ought to make their persons as *contemptible* in the eyes of men, as it certainly renders them *vile* in the sight of God. Heretofore, persons of honour and genteel quality, thought, they could not give a deeper wound to their own *honour*, than by being so much as seen in the company of such as had *lost theirs*: And suitable to this was the practice of the primitive church. In 1 Cor. v.

11. *I have wrote to you, (says St. Paul) not to keep company, if any man, who is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat.* And in 2 Thess.

iii. 14. *If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.* Were this well practised, many would need neither *parlors* nor *anti-chambers* to receive visitants in. But now all possible courtship and attendance is thought too little to be used towards persons in-

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famous and odious, and fit to be *visited* by none but by *God himself*, who visits after a very different manner from the courtiers of the world. And what is the ground of all this? What, the great inducement both *to men* and *women* thus to address to such scandalous livers? Why, the very bottom and ground of all is, that by this means they may give credit and countenance to the vice; that so, *as occasion serves*, they may, without *disrepute*, practise it themselves.

2. The second degree of shamelesness in sin, is, *to defend it*. In *Luke xvi. 15. Ye are they who justify yourselves*, says our Saviour to the *Pharisees*; they were not only egregious hypocrites, and gross violators of the law, but they also faced down the world, that they did well and meritoriously in those very things, in which their hypocrisy and violation of the law did consist. Now, even to extenuate, or excuse a sin, is bad enough; but to defend it, is intolerable. For he who excuses a *sin*, still supposes it to be a *sin*, and only endeavours to cover it, or at least to *take off* some degree of its *guilt*. But he who defends it, utterly *denies its guilt*, and (as I may so speak) absolutely *un-sins it*. For he puts it into another rank and order of actions, asserts its legality, and so confounds the essential differences of mens manners; which is directly *to call evil, good*; the thing

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thing which God declares himself so peculiarly to abominate. Such are properly the devil's advocates. For he who does the part of an advocate, pleads not for mercy upon breach of law confessed; (for this were properly to *beg*, and not to *plead*;) but he alledges, that the law is not broke; and that therefore upon terms of justice his cause is good, and consequently needs no pardon, but pleads right on his side. In like manner, whosoever manages the devil's cause, by defending an ill action, in *pleading* for that, he does by consequence *impeal the law*; to which he endeavours to reconcile it. For if that be not *against the law*, neither can the law be *against that*: So that, by this means, the divine *precept* becomes a party in the crime, and the rule itself a transgressor. To defend sin, is to justify it; and to justify it, is to *pronounce for it according to sentence of law*; and that surely is to condemn the law: An higher affront than which cannot be passed upon the great author and giver of it. Yet such wretches both have been, and still are found in the world. Some of which have dared to argue for their debauchery from *principles* (some call them oracles) *of reason*; and some again have been so unsufferably prophane, as to throw scripture itself in the face of God, by pleading it in behalf of their lewdness. I shall not alledge instances,

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and am sorry that I can : But God knows, what pitiful reasoners, what forlorn disputants such shew themselves, while they plead reason for that which contradicts reason, and alledge scripture in opposition to *religion*. Nothing I am sure can be pleaded for them ; nor perhaps do such persons think, that their actions need either *plea* or *pardon*. For that which may be *defended*, certainly needs not to be *pardoned* ; and therefore, if they will venture things upon this issue, and cast all upon the merits of the cause, they must thank themselves, if, at the last and great judgment, God sends them away with no other sentence but this : That as they have *defended their sins*, so let them now *see*, whether *their sins can defend them*.

3. The third and last degree of *shamelesness* in sin, is *to glory in it*. And higher than this the corruption of man's nature (as corrupt as it is) cannot possibly go ; though, the truth is, this may seem to proceed, not so much from a corruption of it, as from something that is a direct contradiction to it. For can any thing in nature incline a man to glory in his *imperfections* ? To pride and plume himself in his deformities ? Was ever any one yet seen to boast of a blear-eye, or a crooked-back ? And are not the defects of the soul, by so much the more ugly, by how much the soul is naturally
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more noble than the body? and the faculties of one more excellent than the shape and lineaments of the other?

Yet some there are, who have shook off reason and humanity so far, as to proclaim and trumpet out those *villanies upon the house-tops*, which, such as sin but at an ordinary rate of wickedness, commit only in the *corners* of them: *They declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not*; as the Prophet says in *Isa. iii. 9.* And as the Apostle expresses it to the height, *Phil. iii. 19. They glory in their shame.* A thing as much against nature, as it can be against religion; and full as contrary to the course and dictates of the one, as to the most confessed rules of the other. Nevertheless, such monsters there are. For may we not hear some vaunting, what quantities of drink they can pour down? And how many *weak brethren* they have in such heroick pot-combats laid under the *table*? And do not others report with pleasure and ostentation, how dexterously they have over-reached their well-meaning neighbour? How neatly they have gulled him of his estate, or abused him in his bed? And lastly, have not some arrived to that frontless and horrid impudence, as to say openly, *That they hoped to live to see the day, in which an honest woman, or a virtuous man, should be ashamed to shew their head in*

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company? How long such persons may *live* I know not ; how long they *deserve to live*, it is easy to tell. And I dare confidently affirm, that it is as much the concern of government, and the peace of a nation, that the utterers of such things should be laid hold on by the hand of publick justice, as it can be to put to death a thief or an highwayman, or any such common malefactor. For this is publickly to set up a standard in the behalf of vice, to wear its colours, and avowedly to assert and espouse the cause of it, in defiance of all that is sacred or civil, moral or religious. I must confess, I am *ashamed* thus to lay open mens *want of shame*. But whosoever they are, who are come to this height, let them know that they are *consummate* in vice, and upon all accounts so unspeakably bad, that the devil himself can neither *make* nor *wish* them worse. And thus much for the third thing proposed, *which was to shew the several degrees of shamefulness in sin*. Pass we now to the

4th. Which is *to shew the reasons, why it brings down judgment and destruction upon the sinner*. I shall assign two.

1. Because *shamefulness in sin* always *presupposes those actions* and courses which God rarely suffers to go unpunished. It presupposes them, I say, as the proper causes from which this shame-

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shamefulness does proceed. For I have shewn, that *great and heinous crimes, custom in sinning, the criminal examples of great ones, together with a general and received practice of vice,* are the ways and means by which the heart of man comes to be hardened against all sense of, and shame for sin. But now every one of these does most particularly solicit and call upon God for justice, and put the weapons of vengeance into his hands; so that shamefulness in sin provokes and draws down wrath in the strength and stock of that guilt, which a man always contracts before he can *come to be shameless.*

2. The other reason, why shamefulness in sin brings down the divine judgments upon men, is from the destructive influence which it has upon the government of the world. For the better understanding of which, we must observe, that God, the wise and righteous governor of the universe, finds it necessary in the course of his providence to punish *some sins, even in this life.* Such as are *murders, perjuries, adulteries, gross falsehoods, and the like;* and generally all such crimes as have in them a peculiar tendency to overthrow government, and common society amongst men. In the number of which, (if we may call it one kind of sin, and not rather a general preparative to all sin) we may reckon this *shamefulness in sinning.* It is

an observation frequent in *Machiavel*, that when there is a general depravation and corruption of the manners of any people, that government cannot stand. And it is manifest, that the integrity of mens manners cannot be secured, where there is not preserved upon mens minds a true estimate of *vice and virtue*; that is, where vice is not looked upon as shameful and opprobrious, and virtue valued as worthy and honourable. But now, where vice walks with a daring front, and no shame attends the practice, or the practicers of it, there is an utter confusion of the first dividing and distinguishing properties of mens actions; morality falls to the ground, and government must quickly follow. For if virtue comes once to be hissed and exploded, and forced to hide his head, what can recommend it, with all its rigours, to the choice and practice of mankind? since it is not imaginable, that men will take pains to abridge and restrain the unruly appetites of their nature, when no other reward shall follow all these severities, but scorn and reproach. And if, on the other side, all these appetites should be left fully at liberty to take their own exorbitant satisfaction, how shall government support itself? And how shall laws be able to subsist, where the violation of them is become *creditable*, and brings an esteem to the violators?

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tors? This is most certain, that there *can be no fence against vice got into reputation*; especially when the vice acts also in the strength of a mighty natural propensity to it. For in this case, it rushes in upon society like a torrent or inundation with a furious storm driving it on; and virtue must either swim against wind and tide too, that is, both against the struggles of *appetite*, and the discountenance of the *world* besides; or it must sink, and be swallow'd up in the prevailing stream of a contrary practice. *Honour is the birth-right of virtue, and shame of vice.* But if these come to be shifted and transplaced, so that honour still waits on vice, and shame on virtue, government becomes presently like a curious engine torn in pieces, by the violent motion of its own springs and wheels disordered or misplaced.

And whenever it comes to fare thus with any civil state, virtue and common honesty seem to make their appeal to the supreme governor of all things, to take the matter into his own hands, and to correct those clamorous enormities, which are grown too big and strong for *law* or *shame*, or any human *coertion*. And accordingly God often finds himself engaged by some notable judgment to assert and declare his sovereignty, and to convince insolent and audacious sinners, that where shame *ends*, vengeance

geance *must begin*, or the government of the world cease; and that if men will not *see*, they must be made to *feel* the difference between *vice* and *virtue*. For where nature and religion find themselves too weak to redress the extravagance of mens manners, a blow from heaven must do the business, or the societies of the world must fall into confusion and dissolution. but the great judge and ruler of all things, who even for his own honour has undertook the protection of *law, order, and justice* here below, so long as he suffers the world to *stand*, will not suffer these to *fall*. And therefore, when vice is got above all cure, and scorns all the corrections which *fear and shame* can apply, God lays hold on judgment, makes bare his arm, and by doing justice upon daring sinners, does then most eminently do justice to his own providence too. And thus much for the fourth thing proposed; *which was to shew, the reasons why shamefulness in sin brings down judgment and destruction upon the sinner*. I descend now to the

5th, And last. *Which is to shew, what those judgments are, by which it procures the sinner's ruin and destruction*. And for this, it must be confessed, that they neither are, nor can be particularly known to any, but to him, who alone knows the wise and deep counsels of his

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own will, the great *rule* and *compass* which his *providence* steers by. Nevertheless, so far as his *word* dictates, we may safely pronounce; and what we find recorded in that, to have been done by God upon such kind of finners formerly, we may warrantably infer, is the most likely to be done by him again.

Now I shall instance in three several sorts of judgments, which we read in scripture to have been inflicted upon shameless finners: As,

1. A *sudden* and *disastrous* death; and indeed suddenness in this can hardly be without disaster: When the *Israelites* made that wicked combination with the *Moabites*, we find *Zimri*, one of the princes of the people, leading *Cozbi*, an infamous strumpet, into his tent before *Moses*, and all the congregation looking on with weeping eyes, and bleeding hearts. This surely was impudence in the height; impudence (as it were) working up to a full crisis. And we know, how quickly the divine justice revenged it upon them by the sword of *Phineas*, and such a sudden unlooked for execution, as dispatched them both into another *world* without either space or power of repenting for what they had done *in this*.

2. Another sort of judgment, is *war and desolation*. In the sixth and xxth chapters of the book of *Judges*, we read what a detestable
piece

piece of villany was acted by some of the *Benjamites*. And when satisfaction was demanded of them, the whole tribe abets the villany, and the villains too; they own the defence of both with sword in hand; they fight for an action not fit to *be named*, and plead the cause of their lewdness both with their guilt and their blood too about their ears. And was not this to be proof against all shame? For could there be a more absolute and professed homage paid to vice, than thus to march under its banner, and to fight its battles? But what's the consequence of all this? Why a whole tribe is almost cut off and destroyed by a fatal civil war; and such a sweeping overthrow and slaughter of that infamous army, as may for ever be a convincing lesson to such shameless wretches, how ill they consult for themselves, who shed that blood, which should *blush* for sin, in the *foul* and *odious* defence of it.

3. A third sort of judgment is *captivity*. Which was that, here denounced by the Prophet in the text, against the men of *Israel*, now grown past shame. And a severe one it was certainly: When the proud and fierce armies of the *Assyrians* came up against *Jerusalem*, sacked the city, and laid the temple even with the ground; and upon an absolute and entire conquest, carried away the inhabitants captive into

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into *Babylon*. Shameless (it seems) they had been in their sin, and therefore God would make them taste what *shame* was in their punishment; in those bitter taunts and contumelies which always pass upon the conquered from an insolent and victorious enemy. Conquest and captivity are perhaps the bitterest cup that vengeance can put into the hands of a sinful people. *David* chose the plague and pestilence before it, as the lesser evil, and the gentler infliction of the two. And he who shall consider the rage, and lawless fury of a conquering invading army, needs no other account of the calamities of the vanquished: No respect to the aged, no compassion to the infant; in a word, the *Assyrians* were as shameless in their cruelties, as the *Jews* had been in their sins; which made the whole visitation not only a just but also a suitable revenge.

And thus we have seen what those judgments are, which God from time to time has inflicted upon bold and profligate offenders; and are we now sure, that none of all these are kept in reserve for us? The text begins with the charge of *shamelessness*, and ends with the denunciation of judgment; and shall we be able (think we) to divide and separate the latter part of it from the former, the effect from the cause; and while we bring ourselves under one,

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wholly to escape the other? How home the charge reaches us, has been made out, by shewing, with what high impudence some amongst us defend sin, and with what undaunted confidence others live in it; and lastly, with what patronage others countenance it. So that vice has clearly got the victory, and carried it against all opposition. It rides on successfully and gloriously, lives magnificently, and fares deliciously every day; and all this in the face of God and man, without either fear of one, or shame of the other. Nay, so far are our modern sinners from sneaking under their guilt, that they scorn to *hide*, or so much as *hold down* their *head* for less crimes, than many others *have lost theirs*. Such a rampancy of vice has this age of abused mercies, or rather miracles, brought *England* to. While, on the other hand, the widows and orphans of many brave and worthy persons, who had both done and suffered honourably for their prince, their church, and their country, as a reward for all this, live in want and misery, and a dismal lack of all things, because they had rather work or *beg*, do or suffer any thing, than *sin* for their *bread*. This is our present case; and being so, do those thriving wretches know, that this their prosperous and (therefore) contagious lewdness, may not be preparing for us the *fire and faggot*,

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got, or provoking God to pour in a *foreign domineering* enemy upon us, an enemy whom we have been always so sottishly fond of; for hardly any other judgment remains yet untried upon the nation? This surely it is natural and reasonable enough to imagine, that *such as thus glory in their shame* (be they never so high and great) *should have shame and confusion cast upon their glory.* My business, I confess, hitherto has been to discourse upon the *Prophet's* words; and I heartily wish that in so doing, I may not prove too much a *prophet* myself.

But whether things may so happen to us or no, and that this notorious, and almost national impudence in sin should ever bring down any of the forementioned judgments upon us, (which God in mercy avert) one judgment, I am sure, it will infallibly bring along with it, and that is *itself*. And can there be a dreadfuller judgment than *that*, which gives a man an universal disposition to all sin? Which offers up his soul, as it were, a blank to the devil, to write *what he will upon it*? Of all the curses which can possibly befall a sinner, there is none comparable to this, that he should *add iniquity to iniquity, and fall from sin to sin*; which the shameless person cannot but do, till he falls by it too: His recovery, while under that character, being utterly impossible. For where there
is

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is no place *for shame*, there can be none for *repentance*. Shamefulness naturally and necessarily seals a man up under *impenitence*, and impenitence seals him up to destruction. God of his infinite goodness *work better minds in us*, which he must, and will do, if he intends *better things for us*.

To whom be render'd and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, now and for evermore. Amen.

CONCEALMENT of SIN

No Security to the

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SERMON IV.

Concealment of sin no security
to the sinner :

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—*Be sure your sin will find you out.*

OF all the ways to be taken for the prevention of *that* great plague of mankind, *sin*, there is none so rational and efficacious, as to confute and baffle *those* motives, by which *men* are induced to venture upon it ; and amongst all such motives, the heart of man seems chiefly to be over-power'd, and prevail'd upon by two ; to wit, *secrecy in committing sin*, and *impunity* consequent upon it.

Accordingly, *Moses*, in this chapter, having to deal with a company of men suspected guilty

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of a base and fraudulent *design*, tho' couched under a very fair *pretence*, (as most such designs use to be;) he endeavours to dash it in its very conception, by particularly applying himself to encounter those *secret ratiocinations* and arguments, which he knew were the most likely to encourage them in it; and this he does very *briefly*, but *effectually*, by assuring them, that how *covertly* and *artificially* soever they might carry on their *dark project*, yet their *sin* should infallibly find them out.

The subject and occasion of the words is indeed *particular*, but the design of them is manifestly of an *universal import*; as reaching the case of all sinners in the world, in their first entrance upon any sinful act or course. And therefore, I shall consider them according to this latter and more enlarged sense; casting the prosecution of them under these three following *heads*: As,

I. I shall shew, *that men generally*, if not *always*, proceed to the commission of sin, upon a *secret confidence* of *concealment* or *impunity*.

II. I shall shew, the *grounds* and *reasons* upon which men take up such a *confidence*.
And

III. And

III. And *lastly*, I shall shew, the *vanity* of this *confidence*, by declaring those *several ways*, by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be *defeated*.

Of each of which in their order.

First. *And for the first of them*; to wit, that men generally, if not always, proceed to the commission of sin, upon a secret confidence of concealment or impunity.

For the better handling of which proposition, I shall lay down these two *Affertions*.

I. That no man is induced to *sin*, considered in itself, as a thing *absolutely*, or *merely evil*, but as it bears some *resemblance* or *appearance* of good, in the apprehensions of him who commits it. Certain it is, that there can be no *real good* in *sin*; but if it had no shadow, no shew of *good*, it could not possibly be made the object of an *human choice*; the will of man never *choosing* or embracing any thing under the proper notion of *evil*. But then, as to the *kind* of this *good*; if we would know what that is, it is also *as certain*, that no man can be so far deluded, or rather besotted in his judgment, as to imagine, that *sin* can have any thing of *moral good* in it; forasmuch as that

imports a direct *contradiction* to the very *nature*, *notion*, and *definition* of *sin*; and therefore besides that *philosophy*, we know, owns and asserts two other sorts of *good*, to wit, *pleasing* and *profitable*; *good* being properly the denomination of a thing, as it suits with our desires or inclinations. According to which acceptance of the word, whatsoever *pleases* or *profits* us, may, upon that general account, be called *good*; though otherwise it swerves from the stated rules and laws of honesty and morality. And upon the same ground, *sin* itself, so far as it carries either *pleasure* or *profit* with it, is capable of being *apprehended* by the mind of man as *good*; and consequently of being *chosen* or embraced by the *will* as such.

2. The other *assertion* to be laid down, is, that God has annexed *two great evils* to every *sin*, in opposition to the *pleasure* and *profit* of it; to wit, *shame* and *pain*. He has by an eternal, and most righteous decree, made *these two* the inseparable *effects* and *consequents* of *sin*. They are the *wages* assigned it by the laws of heaven; so that whosoever commits it, ought to account *shame* and *punishment* to belong to him, as his rightful inheritance. For it is God who has joined them together by an *irreversible sentence*; and it is not in the power or art of man to put them asunder. And now,

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as God has made these *two evils* the sure consequence of *sin*, so there is nothing which the nature of man does so peculiarly dread and abhor as these; they being indeed the most directly and absolutely destructive of all its enjoyments; forasmuch as they reach and confound it in the *adequate subject* of enjoyment, the *soul* and *body*; *shame* being properly the torment of the one, and *pain* of the other. For the mind of man can have no taste or relish of any pleasure in the world, while it is actually oppressed and overwhelmed with *shame*; nothing does so keenly and intolerably affect the soul, as infamy: It drinks up, and consumes the *quickness*, the *gaiety*, and *activity* of the spirits: It *dejects the countenance*, made by God himself to *look upwards*; so that this noble creature, the master-piece of the creation, dares not so much as *lift up* either his *head* or his *thoughts*, but it is a vexation to him even to *look upon others*, and yet a greater to be *looked upon* by them. And as *shame* thus mortifies the soul, so *pain* or *punishment* (the other twin-effect of *sin*) equally harasses the body. We know, how much misery *pain* is able to bring upon the body in this life; (in which our *pains* and *pleasures*, as well as other things, are but imperfect;) there being never a limb or part, never a vein or artery of the body, but it is the

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scene and receptacle of pain, whensoever it shall please God to unfence it, and let in some sharp disease or distemper upon it. And so exceedingly afflictive are these *bodily griefs*, that there is nothing which affects the body in the way of *pleasure*, in any degree comparable to that which *affects* it in the way of *pain*. For is there any pleasure in nature, which equals the impressions of the *gout*, the *stone*, or even of the *tooth-ach* itself? But then farther, when we shall consider, that the pains which we have here mentioned, and a great many more, are but the *preludiums*, the *first-fruits*, and beginnings of that *pain*, which shall be infinitely advanced, and finally completed in the torments of another world; when the body shall descend into a bed of *fire and brimstone*, and be lodged for ever in the burning furnace of an *Almighty* wrath. This consideration surely will, or ought to satisfy us, that God will not be behind hand with the sinner in point of *punishment*, whatsoever *promises* his sin may have made him in point of *pleasure*.

And now, if we put these *two assertions*, laid down by us, together. As first, *That no man ever engages in sin, but as he apprehends in it something of pleasure or advantage*. And secondly, *That shame and pain are by God himself made the assured consequents of sin*; which

are

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are utterly inconsistent with, and destructive of all such pleasure or advantage: It must needs follow from hence, that the *will* cannot possibly *choose sin*, so long as the *understanding* is under a full conviction or persuasion, that *shame* and *punishment* shall certainly follow the commission of it. For no man, doubtless, is so furiously bent upon his *lust*, or any other infamous *passion*, as to attempt the satisfaction of it in the *market-place*, or in the face of the sun, and of the world, or with the sword of the avenger applied to his heart.

Covetousness (we all know) is a *blinding*, as well as a *pressing*, and a *bold vice*; yet certainly it could never *blind*, nor infatuate any one to that degree, as to make a *judge* take a *bribe* upon the *bench*, or in the open sight of the *court*. No; no man is so far able to conquer, and cast off those *innate fears*, which nature has thought fit to *bridle*, and govern the fury of his affections by, as to bid defiance to an evil, which his best and strongest reasonings assure him to be unsupportable; and therefore his apprehensions must be, some way or other, first unshackled from a belief of these *evils*, before his *will*, and his *choice*, can be let loose to the practice of sin. And does not this give us a most *philosophical*, as well as true account of the infinite reasonableness of the scripture's charging

charging all *sin* upon *unbelief*, as the first *root* and *source* of mens apostasy from God? For let men think and say what they will, yet when they venture upon sin, they do not really believe that God will ever revenge it upon them: They may indeed have some general, faint, speculative belief of *hell* and *damnation*; but such a belief as is particular and practical, and personally applies and brings it home to their own condition, this they are void of; and it is against the methods of reason and nature, for any man to commit sin with such a belief full and fresh upon his spirit: And consequently, the heart must prevaricate and shift off these persuasions the best it can, in order to its free passage to sin; and this can by no other means be so effectually done, as by promising itself *secrecy* in *sin*, and *impunity*, or *escape* after it. For these two reach and remove all a man's fears, by giving him security against those two grand terrifying effects of sin, *shame* and *pain*. Assure but the sinner, that he shall neither be *discovered* nor *punished*, and presently the reins lie loose upon all his appetites; and they are free to take their full swing in all enormities whatsoever. But yet, since this is not to be effected without the help of some arguments and considerations, which may have something of shew, at least, to *delude*, though nothing of

strength

strength to *convince* the reason : therefore,

II. We shall now, under our *next head*, endeavour to give some account of those fallacious grounds, upon which the sinner is apt to take up such a confidence, as to believe that he shall be able to carry off his sin clear, without either *discovery* or *retribution*. And, no doubt, weak and shallow enough we shall find them all ; and such as could never persuade any man to sin, did not his own love to sin persuade him much more forcibly than all such considerations ; some of which are these that follow. As,

I. *First*, men consider the success which they have actually had in the commission of many sins ; and this proves an encouraging argument to them to commit the same for the future ; as naturally suggesting this to their thoughts, that what *they have done so often*, without either *discovery* or *punishment*, may be so done by them again. For nothing does so much confirm a man in the continuance of any practice, as frequent experience of success in what he does ; the proper genuine result of this, being *confidence*.

Some men indeed stumble in their very first *entrance* upon a sinful course ; and this their disappointment frequently proves their cure, by
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making them to retreat and draw off timely, as being disheartened with so unfortunate a beginning. And it is (no doubt) the singular mercy and indulgence of God to such, thus to cross and turn them out of the *paths of destruction*; which had they found smooth, safe, and pleasurable, the corruption of their hearts would have infallibly engaged them in them to their lives end. That traveller, surely, has but little cause to complain, who by breaking a leg, or an arm, at his first setting out upon an unfortunate journey, prevents the losing of his head at his journey's end; it being but a very uncomfortable way of travelling, to finish one's journey and one's life together. Great reason, therefore, have they to own themselves particularly favoured by providence, who have been stopped, and withstood by it, in the very first attempts of any sin, and thereby snatched (as it were a brand) out of the fire, or (which is yet better) have been kept from ever *falling into it*: Their being *scorched* has prevented their being *burnt*; while the fright, caused by the danger they so narrowly escaped, has been always fresh upon their memories: And such as come to be thus happily *frighted into their wits*, are not so easily fooled out of them again. In short, all frustration in the first essays of a vicious course, is a baulk to the confidence of the

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the bold undertaker. And therefore, on the contrary, when God is pleased to leave a man under the *full sway* and *power of any vice*, he does not concern his providence to lay any block or impediment in such an one's way, but suffers him to go on and *succeed* in his *villany*, to effect all his projects, and compass the full satisfaction of his *lewd desires*. And this flushes him up, and makes him hard and *insensible*; and that makes him venturous and daring; and so locks him fast in the embraces of his sin, while he has not the least surmise of the fadness of the issue, and that the *present sweets* of sin will, and must be *bitterness in the end*; but like a sot in a tavern, first drinks himself drunk, and then forgets that there is a reckoning to be paid.

Such an one, the devil accounts he has fast enough; and for that cause, none shall so studiously endeavour to promote a man's *quiet* and *success* in sin, as he, who at present *tempts* him to it, and will hereafter *torment* him for it. For the devil desires not that the sinner should feel any trouble for sin, till he comes to feel it for good and all in *that place*, which is designed only for *payment*, and ~~not~~ *amendment*; and where all that he can do or suffer to eternal ages, can contribute nothing to his *release*. And therefore, that the sinner may
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sleep on foundly in his sin, the *devil* will be sure to make his *bed soft enough*. It is said of the *Spaniard*, that there are two things much accounted of, and desired by many in the world, which yet he heartily wishes his enemy; one is, that if he be a *gamester*, he may win; the other, that if he be a *courter* of women, he may obtain his desires; for that he knows well enough, that either of these courses will, in all likelihood, prove his undoing at long run. In like manner, when the devil has the management of a sinner, he will spread his wing over him so, that he shall never be alarmed with dangers, disgraces, and other calamitous effects of sin, (if the officious tempter can ward them off) but shall pursue his vice with ease, safety, and reputation.

And while the sinner can do so, such is the proneness of man by nature to *deceive himself* in a thing which he passionately *desires*, that having thus acquitted himself to himself, he takes it for granted, that God will acquit him too; and like our late *sanctified*, and since *justified* rebels, concludes, that God and he (forsooth) are still of a mind: In *Eccles. viii. 11. Because* (says the wise man) *sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* Here he gives us an account of the *secret*
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reasoning of most sinners *hearts*; namely, that because God does not confound them in the very *act of sin*, by some *immediate judgment*, therefore they resolve upon a more audacious progress in it; and so sing *Agag's requiem* to themselves, *That surely the bitterness of death is past*: But much surer will such find it, that no man's being *past fear*, makes him *past feeling* too; nor that the distance of an *evil* abates the *certainty* of it. And yet, the great *knower of hearts* ascribes mens resolution to sin to such reasonings as these, (as sottish and absurd as they are;) so that in *Psal.* l. having reckoned up several flagitious practices, he adds, in ver. 21. *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence, and thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.* God's *silence* (it seems) passes with such for his *consent*, and his not attacking the guilty wretch by a present execution, makes him conclude, that heaven has *passed an act of Oblivion* upon all his rogueries, so that henceforth he shall live and die a prosperous *indemnified villain*, and *his sin never find him out*. In which case, certainly for a *sinner* thus to presume to *absolve himself from his own sins*, is itself a greater sin than any of those which he can pretend to absolve himself from. But,

2. *A second ground*, upon which men are apt to persuade themselves, that they shall escape the stroke of divine justice for their sins, is their observation of the great and flourishing condition of some of the *topping sinners* of the world. They have seen *perjury* and *murder* nestle themselves into a *throne*, live triumphant, and *die* peaceably; and this makes them question whether God will ever concern himself to *revenge* that hereafter, which he seems so much to *connive at*, and *countenance* here; especially, since men are so generally apt to judge of *things* and *persons* according to the present *face* and appearance of them; that they make the *present*, the sole measure of the *future*, guide their *hopes* and their *fears* by what they actually *see* and *feel*; and in a word, make their *outward senses* the rule and ground of their *inmost ratiocinations*.

For could we hear the *secret language* of most mens thoughts, we should hear them making such kind of *answers* and *replies* to the checks of conscience dissuading them from sin, and laying the danger of it before them, as these: Pray, what mischief befell such an *oppressor*, such a *tyrant*, or such a *rebel*? And who passed his life with more *affluence* and *jollity*, than such an *Epicure*, such a *money-monger*, such a *tally-broker*, and cheater of the *publick*? And have
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not some dexterous *accomptants* got estates, and made their fortunes, by a clever stroke or two of their pen? And by a *skilful mistake*, wrote themselves forty or fifty thousand pounds richer than they were before, in a trice? And did not that discreet *Roman Verres*, lighting into a wealthy province, plunder and carry off from thence enough to serve *himself*, his *friends*, and his *judges* too? And why may not others, *whose parts lie the same way*, follow such lucky examples? And the *thriving hypocrites of the present age* find as *fair quarter* from God and man, as any of *the former*? With such *considerations* as these, (if they may be called so) men commonly arm themselves against all the *threatnings* of the divine judgments; and think that, in the strength of them, they can warrant the most resolute pursuit of their *vices* for safe and rational. They see not the smoke of the *bottomless pit*, and so *dread not* the fire.

Flourishing sinners are indeed plausible arguments to induce men to sin: But, thanks be to God, that for a sinner to *spend and end his days flourishing*, is a privilege allowed by him to very few; and those only such, as are likely to be much *lower* in the other world, than ever they were *high* in this. But,

3. *As we have shewn* how mightily men are heartened on to their sins, by the *successful ex-*

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amples of others, *as bad* as themselves, or perhaps *worse*; so the next ground, upon which such are wont to promise themselves *security*, both from the discovery and punishment of their sins, is the opinion which they have of *their* own singular art and cunning to conceal them from the *knowledge*, or, at least, of their *power* to rescue them from the *jurisdiction* of any earthly judge. The *eye of man*, they know, is but of a weak sight, and a short reach; so that he neither sees in the *dark*, nor pierces into the *cabinet-council*, and *corner-practices* of his neighbours; and therefore, these *sons of darkness*, who love to *work*, as well as *walk* in the *dark*, doubt not, but to contrive and cast the commission of their villanies under such sure coverts of *secrecy*, that they shall be able to laugh at all *judges* and *witnesses*, and defy the inspection of the most curious and exact enquirers. And this makes them proceed to sin with such *bravadoes* in their hearts as these: Who shall ever see, or hear, or know what I do? The *sun* itself, the *eye of the world*, shall never be conscious to my actions; even the *light* and the *day* shall be strangers to my retirements. So that, unless the stones I tread upon, cry out against me, and the *beam out of the wall* accuse, and my own cloaths arraign me, I fear no discovery: This is the language, these

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these the inward *boasts* of *secret* or rather *self-befooled* sinners.

But now, what if such strange things as these should sometimes come to pass? And it should so fall out, (as it will appear by and by) that even these dumb, inanimate things are sometimes unaccountably enabled to clamour and depose against the guilty wretch; so that, to the amazement of the world, he is drawn forth into *publick view* out of all his lurking holes, and *pavilions of darknes*? Why then, upon such surprizing accidents as these, some have yet a *farther asylum* to fly to, and reckon that their *power and interest* shall protect them; and so secure the sinner, notwithstanding the discovery of the sin. And the truth is, if matters stand so with them, that the *height* of their *condition* equals the *height* of their *crimes*, what care such *ungodly great* ones, whether or no their sins *are known*, so long as their persons must *not be touched*? No, so far are such from *excusing* or *covering* their *lawless practices*, that they choose rather to *own* and *wear them* in the *eye of the world*, as badges of their *power*, and marks of such a *greatness*, as has set itself above the reach of either *shame* or *fear*; even *treason* itself dreads not a discovery, if the overgrown traitor be but mighty enough to bear it out; but it shall *walk abroad* openly, and

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look the world in the face undauntedly, with all the *consciousness* of a clamorous *guilt*, and yet with the confidence of *innocence* itself. For we must know, that it is not *mere guilt*, but *guilt weak and disarmed*, which exposes an offender to the merits of his offence; they are only the *minorum gentium malefici, malefactors* of a *lower form*, who break the law, and are *hanged for it*. Whereas, let a crime be never so foul, and so notorious, yet if the wary *criminal* has so armed and encompassed himself with *friends and money*, as to stave off all approaches of *justice*, howsoever his *sin may find him out*, yet he persuades himself, that his *punishment cannot*; and that is as much as he cares for. For a *man's debts* will never fright him, if the *officer* dares not *arrest* him; and he will hardly fear *breaking* the law, who knows that he can *trample* upon it too. But,

4. *The fourth and last ground* (which I shall mention) of mens promising themselves security from the punishment of their sins, is a strong presumption, *that they shall be able to repent, and make their peace with God when they please*; and this, they fully reckon, will keep them *safe*, and effectually shut the door against their *utmost fears*, as being a reach beyond them all. For let a man be never so deeply possessed with a belief of God's *sin-revenging justice*, never so much

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much persuaded, that all the wrath, which the *curse of the law* can threaten or inflict, is most certainly entailed, not upon sin only in general, but also upon his own sin in particular; nay, let damnation be always present to his thoughts, and the fire of hell continually flaming in his apprehensions; yet all this shall not be able to take him off from his resolution to sin, and his confidence of escape, because he has an argument in reserve, which he thinks will answer all, to wit, an *after-repentance*. For if this shall interpose between the *commission of sin*, and the *punishment of it*, he concludes, upon the stock of all God's *promises to the penitent*, that he is past danger; and consequently, has *outwitted the law* and *the curse*, and so stands *rectus in curiâ*, in spite of all the threatnings of *death* and *damnation*.

And as he thus reckons that *repentance* will secure him, so he doubts not but he can command that when he will; as, according to the doctrine of *Pelagius* and his modern admired followers, he certainly may; *repentance* in their divinity being a work entirely in the power of the sinner's will. So that now the sinner's main business must be to *time* his *repentance* artificially, and to retreat opportunely before the hand of vengeance be actually upon him: And if he can but prevent, and be too nimble

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for that ; why then, he comes off clear and successful, with flying colours, having enjoyed the *pleasures* and *advantages* of his sin, without enduring any thing of the *smart*, or sad consequences of the same.

But now, how wretched an inference this is, for any man to form to himself, and thereby to mock and defy heaven ! and yet how deep it lies in the hearts of most sinners, may easily be observed by men of sense ; and will be sadly rued by such as are not so, when it is too late. For this is manifestly the great fort and castle, the *citadel* and *strong tower*, which the soul has built to itself, to repair to, whenever it has a mind to sin both with *delight* and *security* too. And were it not for this, it would be impossible for any considering man to satisfy himself in his continuance in any known sin for one moment. For he could not, with any consistence with that mighty overruling principle of *self-preservation*, commit a sin, if he assuredly knew or believed that he should be damned for it ; which yet, since the infinitely just and true *God* has most peremptorily decreed and threatned, unless *repentance* shall intervene, it is evident, that his whole refuge must lie in the *intervention* of that ; which also he persuades himself, shall, in due time, step in between him and the *fatal blow*. And
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this very consideration utterly evacuates the terrifying force of the divine threatning; and by promising the sinner a *fair issue* of things, both here and hereafter, makes the poor *self-deluding* and *deluded creature* conclude, *that his sin shall never find him out.*

And thus having shewn some of those *fallacious grounds*, upon which men use to build their confidence of the *concealment*, or at least of the *impunity* of their sins; I proceed now to the

III. And *last general head*, at first proposed by us: *Which was, to shew the vanity of such a confidence, by declaring those several ways, by which, in the issue, it comes certainly to be defeated; and that both with reference to this world, and the next.* And,

1. For this world; there are various ways, by which it comes to be disappointed here: As,

(1.) The very *confidence itself of secrecy*, is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's *discovery*. For confidence in such cases causes a frequent *repetition* of the same action; and if a man does a thing frequently, it is odds, but some time or other he is discovered: For by this he subjects himself to so many more accidents; every one of which may possibly betray him.

He who has escaped in many battles, has yet been killed in the issue; and by playing too often at the *mouth of death*, has been *snapped* by it at last.

Add to this, that *confidence* makes a man *venturous*, and venturousness casts him into the high road of *danger*, and the very arms of *destruction*. For while a man ventures, he properly *shuts the eyes* of his reason. And he, who shuts his own eyes, lies so much the more open to those of other men.

(2.) There is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of *unusual, unlikely accidents*, for the discovery of great sins; a villany committed perhaps *but once in an age*, comes sometimes to be found out also by such an accident, as scarce happens above *once in an age*. For there are some sins more immediately invading the great interests of *society, government and religion*; which providence sets itself in a more peculiar manner to detect, and *bring to light*, in spite of all the coverings which art or power can cast over them: Such as are *murder, perjury, and sacrilege* (all of them accounted sins of the foulest guilt before *forty one*, but *marks of regeneration* with many ever since:) And more particularly for murder; in what a strange, stupendous manner does providence oftentimes trace it out; though concealed with
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all the closeness, which *guilt* and *skill*, and the *legerdmain* of a well *packed* and *paid jury* can secure it by ?

Such *small*, such *contemptible*, and almost *unobservable* hints have sometimes unravell'd and thrown open the mysterious contexture of the deepest-laid villanies, and delivered the *murderer* into the hands of *justice*, by means, which seem'd almost as much *above nature*, as the sin committed was *against it*.

And the like instances might be given in many other *crying sins*, which sometimes cry so *long*, and so *loud* too, that they come at length to be *seen*, as well as heard, and to alarm the earth, as well as pierce *heaven*. *Curse not the king, no not in thy heart*, (says the wise man, in *Eccles. x. 20.*) *For a bird in the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter* : Though some, I confess, are of opinion, that such as *have no wings*, are much nimbler and quicker in *carrying and telling these matters*, than *such as have*. But to keep to these remarkable words now before us ; if the *bird upon the house-top* (as the text seems to intimate) shall be able (in such a case as this) to tell what is done or *whispered within the house* ; and these inhabitants of the air shall have keys to our chambers, and our closets, nay, and to our very hearts too ; how

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can there be such a thing in the world as *secrecy*? (As the truth is, setting aside all *tropes* and *hyperboles*, there is but very little :) And then, if such *informers* as these find out the *treason*, we may be sure, that the *treason* itself will not fail to find out the *traytor*.

For let a criminal seem never so safe in his own thoughts, and in the thoughts of all about him, yet still he must know, that the justice of God has him in *chace*, and will one day shew, that *it never hunts surer*, than when the politicians of the world think it *upon a cold scent*. For how many strange, intricate, and perplexed villanies have been ript up, and spread far and near, which the subtle actors of them, both *before*, and *in*, and *after* the commission, fully believed, could not possibly be discovered? Whereas on the contrary, it is most certain, that no man, though never so crafty and sagacious, can propose to himself such great *unlikelihoods* for the discovery of any action, but others, altogether as crafty, have actually failed, and miscarried under the very same, or greater.

And therefore the *Psalmist*, most appositely to our present purpose, observes, *Psal. xxxvi. 2. That the sinner flatters himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found out*: That's the issue; and no wonder, if such a practice comes to such an end.

For

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For whosoever flatters himself, cheats and betrays himself by false reasonings; and by not dealing clearly and impartially with himself, but grounding his presumption of secrecy upon arguments represented to him much firmer and stronger, than his own experience, severely judging, would allow them to be. For, if such an one finds an accident highly *improbable*, he will presently scrow it up, from thence, to *impossible*, and then conclude, that in so vast a number of *contingencies*, one of a million shall never hit his case. And very probably it may not. But what if it should? Why then, one such unlucky event will fully *pay the reckoning* for all former escapes? and one treason or felony discovered, will as certainly bring his neck to the block or the halter, as a thousand, were they all of them crowded together into one and the same indictment against him.

(3.) *God sometimes makes one sin the means of discovering another*: It often falling out with two *vices*, as with two thieves or rogues; of whom it is hard to say, which is worse, and yet one of them may serve well enough to betray and find out the other. How many have by their *drunkenness* disclosed their *thefts*, their *lusts*, and *murders*, which might have been buried in perpetual silence, had not the sottish committers of them buried their *reason* in their

cups? For the *tongue* is then got loose from its obedience to *reason*, and commanded at all adventures by the fumes of a distemper'd brain, and a roving imagination; and so presently pours forth whatsoever they shall suggest to it, sometimes casting away *life, fortune, reputation*, and all in a breath.

And how does the *confident* sinner know, but the *grace of God*, which he has so often affronted and abused, may some time or other desert, and give him up to the sordid temptations of the *jug*, and the *bottle*, which shall make the doors of his heart *fly open*; and cause his own tongue to give in *evidence* against him, for all the villanies which had lain so long *heaped up*, and concealed in his guilty breast? For let no man think, that he has the secrets of his *own mind* in his *own* power, while he has not himself so; as it is most certain, that he has not, who is actually under a *debauch*: For this confounds, and turns all the faculties of the soul topsy-turvy; like a storm tossing and troubling the sea, till it makes all the foul, black stuff, which lay at the bottom, to swim, and roll upon the top.

In like manner, the *drunken man's heart* floats upon his lips, and his inmost *thoughts* proclaim, and write themselves upon his *forehead*; and therefore, as it is an usual, and indeed

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deed a very rational saying, *That a liar ought to have a good memory*; so upon the like account, *a person of great guilt, ought to be also a person of great sobriety*; lest otherwise his very *soul* should, some time or other, chance to be *poured out* with his *liquor*: For commonly the same hand which *pierces* the vessel, *broaches* the heart also, and it is no strange, nor unusual passage from the *tavern* to the *jail*.

(4.) *God sometimes infatuates*, and strikes the sinner with *frenzy*, and such a *distractiō*, as causes him to reveal all his hidden baseness; and to *blab* out such *truths*, as will be sure to be revenged upon him who speaks them. In a word, God blasts, and takes away his understanding, for having used it so much to the dishonour of him who gave it; and delivers him over to a sort of *madness*, too black and criminal to be allowed any refuge in *Bedlam*. And for this, there have been several fearful instances of such wretched contemners of heaven, as having, for many years, outfaced all the world, both about them, and above them too, with a solemn look, and a demure countenance, have yet, at length, had their loathsome *inside* turned *outwards*, and been made an abhorred spectacle to men and angels. For it is but just with God, when men have debauched their

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consciences, to bereave them of their senses also; and to disturb, and disarm their reason so, as to disable it from standing upon its guard, even by that last and *lowest sort of self-defence*, the *keeping of its own counsel*; for no chains will hold a *mad man's* tongue, no fetters can restrain the ramble of his discourse, nor *bind* any one *faculty* of his soul or body to its *good behaviour*: But all that is within him, is promiscuously thrown out; and his *credit*, with all that is dear to him, is at the mercy of this *unruly member*, (as S. *James* calls it) which, in the present case, has *no mercy* upon him, whom it belongs to; nor any thing to govern it, but a violent, frantick humour, wholly unable to govern itself.

(5.) *God sometimes* lets loose the sinner's conscience upon him, filling it with such horror for sin, as renders it utterly unable to *bear* the burden it labours under, without publishing, or rather proclaiming it to the world.

For some sorts of sin there are, which will lie *burning* and *boiling* in the sinner's *breast*, like a kind of *Vesuvius*, or fire pent up in the *bowels* of the *earth*; which yet *must*, and *will*, (in spite of all obstacles) force its way out of it at length; and thus, in some cases of sin, the anguish of the mind grows so exceeding *fierce* and *intolerable*, that it finds no rest with-

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in itself, but is even ready to *burst*, till it is delivered of the *swelling secret* it labours with : Such kind of guilt being to the conscience, like some offensive meats to the stomach, which no sooner takes them in, but it is in pain and travail, till it throws them out again.

Who knows the force, the power, and the remorseless rage of *conscience*, when God commissions it to call the sinner to an account ? How strangely it will *sift and winnow* all his retirements ? How terribly it will wring and torture him, till it has bolted out the *bidden guilt*, which it was in search of ? *All* which is so mighty an argument of the prerogative of God over mens hearts, that no *malefactor* can be *accounted free*, though in *his own keeping*, nor any one *concealed*, though never so much out of sight ; for still God has his serjeant, or officer in the sinner's breast ; who will be sure to attack him, as soon as ever the *great judge* shall but give the word : An *officer* so strictly true to his trust, that he is neither to be *softened*, nor *sweetned* ; neither to be *begged*, nor *bought off* ; nor consequently, in a word, fit to be of the jury, when a *rich*, or *potent malefactor* comes to be tried, in hopes to be brought off.

And this also shews the great *importance* and *wisdom* of that advice of *Pythagoras*, namely,
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that every man, when he is about to do a wicked action, should, above all things in the world, stand in awe of himself, and dread the witness within him ; who sits there as a spy over all his actions, and will be sure, one day or other, to accuse him to himself ; and perhaps put him upon such a rack, as shall make him accuse himself to others too.

For this is no new thing, but an old experimented case ; there having been several in the world, whose conscience has been so much too hard for them, that it has compelled them to disclose a villanous fact, even with the *gibbet and the halter* set before their eyes ; and to confess their guilt, though they saw *certain and immediate death* the reward of that *confession*.

But most commonly has *conscience* this dismal effect upon great sinners, at their departure out of this world ; at which time, some feel themselves so horribly *stung* with the guilty sense of some *frightful sin*, that they cannot die with any tolerable peace, till they have revealed it ; finding it some small relief (it seems) and *easement* of their *load*, to leave the knowledge of their sin behind them, *though they carry the guilt of it along with them.*

(6.) And *lastly*, *God sometimes* takes the work of *vengeance* upon himself, and immediately,
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with *his own arm*, repays the sinner, by some notable judgment from heaven : Sometimes, perhaps, he strikes him *dead suddenly* ; and sometimes he smites him with some loathsome disease, (which will hardly be thought the *gout*, whatsoever it may be called) and sometimes again, he strangely blasts him in his name, family, or estate, so that all about him stand amazed at the blow ; but *God* and the *sinner* himself know well enough the *reason*, and the meaning of it too.

Justice, we know, uses to be pictured *blind*, and therefore it finds out the sinner, not with its eyes, but with its *hands* ; not by *seeing*, but by *striking* : And it is the honour of the *great attribute* of God's *justice*, which he thinks so much concerned, to give some *pledge* or specimen of itself upon bold sinners in this world ; and so to assure them of a *full payment hereafter*, by paying them something in the way of *earnest* here.

And the truth is, *many* and *marvellous* have been the instances of God's dealing in this manner, both with *cities* and *whole nations*. For when a guilt has spread itself so far, as to become *national*, and grown to such a bulk, as to be too *big* for all controul of *law* ; so that there seems to be a *dispute*, whether *God* or *sin* governs the world ; surely it is then high time for God to do his own work with his own

hand, and to assert his prerogative against the *impudent defiers* of it, by something every whit as signal and national, as the *provocation* given; whether it be by *war*, *plague*, or *fire*, (all which we have been *visited with*, though neither *corrected*, nor changed by;) and to let the common nufances of the age, the professed enemies of *virtue* and *religion*, and the very *blots* and *scandal* of human nature itself know, that there still remains upon them a *flaming guilt* to account for, and a dreadful *judge* to account to.

And thus I have gone over several of those ways by which a man's *sin overtakes and finds him out in this world*. As first, the very confidence itself of *secrecy*, is a direct and natural cause of the sinner's *discovery*. Secondly, There is sometimes a strange, providential concurrence of unusual, unlikely *accidents*, for the bringing to light great *villanies*. Thirdly, God sometimes makes one *great sin* a means to detect and lay open *another*. Fourthly, God sometimes infatuates, and strikes the sinner with *frenzy*, and such a *distractiō*, as makes him reveal all his hidden *guilt*. Fifthly, God sometimes *lets loose* the sinner's *conscience* upon him, so that he can find no rest *within himself*, till he has confessed and declared his sin. Sixthly and lastly, God sometimes *smites* and *confounds*

Serm. 4. *Security to the Sinner.* 163

founds him, by some notable, immediate judgment from heaven.

These, I say, are some of the chief ways by which God finds out the sinner in this life. But what now, if none of all these should reach *his* case, but that he carries his crimes all his life *closely*, and ends that quietly; and perhaps in the eye of the world, honourably too; and so has the good luck to have his *shame* cast into, and covered under the same ground with his *carcass*? Why yet, for all this, the man has not *escaped*; but his *guilt* still haunts, and follows him into the other world, where there can be no longer a concealment of it, but it must *inevitably find him out*. For as it is in *Daniel*, ch. vii. ver. 10. *When the judgment shall be set, the books shall be also opened.* Even those *domesday books* (as I may so call them) wherein God has kept a complete register of all the villanies that were ever committed against him, which then shall be displayed, and read aloud in the audience of that great and terrible court. The *consideration* of which, surely, may well put those excellent words of the Apostle in *Rom.* vi. 21. with this little alteration of them, into our mouths. *What fruit can we [now] have of those things, whereof we shall [then] be ashamed!* So, what advantage of *pleasure, profit, or honour*, can

164 *Concealment of Sin, no* Sermon. 4.

the sinner promise to himself from any sin, which may be laid in the balance against that infinite and incredible weight of *reproach*, with which it will certainly pay him home at that day?

For, could he persuade *the mountains to cover him*, or could he hide himself in the *bosom of the great deep*, or could he wrap himself in the very *darkness of hell*; yet still *his sin* would fetch him out of *all*, and present him naked, open, and defenceless before that *fiery tribunal*, where he must receive the sentence of everlasting confusion; and where the devil himself will be sure to do him justice, as never failing to be a most liberal rewarder of all his *pimps* and *vassals*, for the *secret service* done him in this world.

And now, what is the whole foregoing discourse, but a kind of panegyrick (such a mean one as it is) upon that glorious thing *innocence*? I say innocence, which makes that man's face shine in publick, whose actions and behaviour it governs in private. For the innocent person lives not under the continual torment of doubts and fears, lest he should be discovered; for the light is his friend, and to be seen and looked upon is his advantage: The most retired parts of his life being like jewels; which though indeed most commonly kept locked up in the cabinet, yet

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yet are then most admired and valued, when *shewn*, and *set forth* by the *brightness* of the *sun*, as well as by *their own*.

How poor a thing *secrecy* is to corrupt a rational man's behaviour, has been sufficiently declared already, by the *survey*, which we have taken, of those several ways, whereby *the most wise and just governor of the world* is pleased to defeat, and befool the confidence of the subtlest, and the *sliest sinners*. We have seen also, what *paper walls* such persons are apt to inclose themselves with; and how *slight, thin, and transparent* all their finest contrivances of secrecy are; while, notwithstanding all the private recesses, and *dark closets*, which they so much trust in, the *windows of heaven* are still open over *their heads*: And now, what should the consideration of all this do, but every *minute* of our lives remind us, *so* to behave ourselves, *as* under the eye of that God, who *sees in secret*, and *will reward us openly*?

To whom be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore.
Amen.

The RECOMPENCE
OF THE
REWARD.
A
SERMON

Preached before the
UNIVERSITY of OXFORD.

THE RECORDS

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SERMON V.

The Recompence of the Reward.

HEBREWS xi. 24, 25, 26.

By faith Moses, when he came to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter : Choosin^g rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches, than all the treasures of Egypt. For he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

THIS chapter exhibits to us a noble and victorious army of saints, together with an account of those heroick actions and exploits, which they were renowned for, in their several ages ; and have been since transmitted

mitted such to posterity. *As, that they subdued kingdoms, wrought wonders, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire; and in a word, triumphed over the cruellest and bitterest persecutions.* And the great spring or principle, which (in spite of all their enemy's power, and their own weakness) bore them up to these high achievements, is not obscurely intimated in the person of *Moses* to have been *a respect to the recompence of reward.* Thus (as it were) fastening one hand upon the *promise*, and turning about the world with the other.

A due consideration of which ground and motive of action in so great a person, and so authentick an example of sanctity, as *Moses* was, may justly make us wonder at that strange proposition, or rather paradox, which has, for so long a time, passed current with too many; namely, *that a Christian, in all acts of duty, ought to sequester his mind from all respect to an ensuing reward, and to commence his obedience wholly and entirely upon the love of duty itself, abstracted from all regard to any following advantages whatsoever.* And that to do otherwise, is to act as a *slave*, and not as a *son*; a temper of mind, which will certainly embase and discommend all our services to the acceptance of Almighty God.

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This is a glorious speech, I confess, and to the Angels, to the *Cherubims* and *Seraphims* perhaps practicable; whose natures being so different from, and so much superior to ours, may (for ought we know) have as different and superior a way of acting too. But then we are to consider, that even that known and so much celebrated *aphorism*, which this *assertion* is manifestly founded upon; to wit, *that virtue is its own reward*, will, upon examination, be found true only in a limited sense. That is to say, in respect of a *sufficiency of worth* in it to *deserve* our choice, but not in respect of a *sufficiency of power* actually to *engage* our choice. For such a sufficiency it has not; and consequently, if taken in this sense, and applied to men in their natural estate, though under any height or elevation of piety whatsoever, it is so far from being the true and refined sense of the Gospel, (as some pretend) that it is really absurd in *reason*; and, I suppose, that to demonstrate it not to be *evangelical*, there needs no other course to be taken, than to prove it to be *irrational*. And this, by God's assistance, I shall endeavour to do in the following discourse. The foundations of which, I shall lay in these four previous propositions:

I. That

I. That the Gospel, or doctrine of Christianity does not *change*, and much less *destroy*, or *supersede* the natural way of the soul's acting.

II. That it is natural for the soul, in the way of *inclination* and *appetite*, to be moved only by such objects, as are in themselves *desirable*.

III. That as it is natural for the soul to be thus moved, only by things *desirable*, so it is equally natural to it to be moved by them only in that *degree and proportion*, in which they are *desirable*: And consequently in the

IV. And *last place*, that whatsoever is proposed as a motive or inducement to any action, ought for that reason to be in an higher degree *desirable*, and to have in it a greater fitness to *move* and *affect the will*, than the action itself, to which it is proposed as a *motive*.

For, otherwise, it would be superfluous, and indeed, no additional motive to it at all; forasmuch as the *bare action*, so considered, would be as strong an argument to a man to perform it, as *such a motive* (being but in the same degree *desirable*) could be to *induce him* to it.

Now these four propositions fully weighed, and put together, will amount to a clear proof

of that which I first intended to prove. *For to be moved by rewards*, belongs not to a man properly as *corrupt* or *depraved* in his nature thro' the *fall*, but simply as he *is a man*; a creature endued with the faculties of *understanding* and *will*: And therefore, since the Gospel (as we have shewn) entrenches not upon the natural way of the soul's *working*, it follows, that neither under the Gospel can it be unlawful to *engage in duty from a respect to a future recompence*. And moreover, since it is natural to the will to be *more moved* by that, which is in itself *more desirable*; and since that, which is given as a motive to any *action*, ought to be in itself more desirable than *that action*; and lastly, since God proposes *rewards*, as such *motives* to the *actions* of *duty* and *obedience*, it roundly follows, that it is not only lawful, in the matter of obedience, *to have respect to the recompence of reward*, but also, that according to the *natural order* of human acting, the soul should have *respect* to that in the first place; and then, being animated and enlivened thereby, should *respect* the works of duty and obedience in the next.

But to bring things into a narrower compass, and so both to prosecute the subject more fully, and to represent it more clearly; I shall reduce what I have to say upon it into these two propositions:

I. That

I. That in the actions *of duty*, considered barely *as duty*, or *as morally good*, and *fit to be done*, there is not a sufficient motive to engage the will of man in a constant practice of them.

II. That the proposal of a *reward* on God's part, and a *respect* had to it on man's, are certainly necessary to engage men in such a course of duty and obedience.

This proposition naturally and unavoidably issues from the former; and accordingly, we shall consider both of them in their order.

1. And first, for the first of them, to wit, *that duty considered barely as duty, does not carry in it a sufficient motive to engage the will of man in the constant practice of it.* And this I shall endeavour to make out by these following reasons: As 1. If in the soul of man its *aversion* to duty be much greater and stronger than its *inclination* to it, then *duty*, considered barely in itself, is not sufficient to determine the *will of man* to the constant performance of it; which, in my judgment, is an argument so *forcible* and *clear*, that one of greater *force* and *clearness* cannot well be desired. For unless *hatred* must pass for *courtship*, and *hostility* for *allurement*, certainly that, from *which the will is so averse*, cannot be a proper means to win

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upon it, or to get into its embraces. No! sooner may the *fire* be attracted by the center of the *earth*, or the *vine* clasp about the *bramble*; than any faculty of the soul have its inclinations drawn forth by a contrary and distateful object.

And then, for the ground of this argument, to wit, *that the soul has originally such an averseness to duty*; this, I suppose, is but too evident to need any farther probation. For that horrid proneness of man's will to all vice, that inundation of lewdness, which with such an unresisted facility, or rather such an uncontrouled predominance has spread itself over the whole world, is a sad, but full eviſtion of this fatal truth. For what mean all those hard reſtraints and shackles put upon us in our minority? What are those ſeveral arts of discipline and education, those early preventions, but ſo many banks (as it were) raised up to keep that ſea of impurity, that ſwells within our nature, from pouring itself forth into actual enormities upon every occasion? How hardly is the reſtive, unruly will of man firſt *tamed* and *broke* to duty? How exceeding hardly are its native reluctancies *maſtered*, and ſubdued to the ſober rules of morality? Duty carries with it a *grim*, and a *ſevere aſpect*; and the very nature of it involves *difficulty*. And *difficulty*, certainly, is no very apt thing to ingratiate or
endear

endear itself to mens practices or affections. Nay, so undeniable is the truth of this, that the very scene of virtue is laid in our natural averſeness to things excellent and praise-worthy. For *virtue* is properly a *force upon appetite, the conquest of an inclination, and the powerful bending of the mind* to unusual choices, and preter-natural courses: so that, indeed, to live virtuously, is to swim against the stream; to be above the pleasures of sense, and in a word, to be good in spite of *inclination*.

And upon this account alone it is, that virtue carries so high a price in the world, and that it attracts such a mighty esteem and value, both to itself, and to him who has it, and that even from those who have it not. For, if to lie a bed, to fare deliciously, and to flow with all sorts of delight and plenty, were *to be virtuous*, there could be no more commendation due to a virtuous person, than to one who had pleased his palate, fed lustily, and slept well. But nothing *easy* ever did or will draw after it either *applause* or *admiration*. No, these are things which wait only upon the painful, the active, and laborious; upon those, who both *do* and *undergo* such things, as the rest of mankind are unwilling and afraid to meddle with; and that gives them *fame* and *renown*, and *lustre* in the eyes of the world round about them: For to reconcile

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ease and *splendor* together is impossible; and not only the *course of providence*, but the *very nature of things* protests against it. And therefore, the paths of virtue must needs lie through craggy rocks and precipices; its very food is *abstinence*; it is cherished with *industry* and *self-denial*; it is exercised, and kept in heart, with *arduous attempts*, and *hard services*; and if it were otherwise, it could neither be *high*, nor *great*, nor *honourable*, nor indeed so much as *virtue*.

But now, if this be the *natural* complexion of *virtue* and *duty*, by such terrifying severities to raise in the soul a kind of horror of it, and aversion to it, let this be the *first reason*, why duty considered barely in itself, and abstracted from all *reward*, is not sufficient to engage men in the *practice of it*. Next to which,

2. The second reason, for the proof of the same truth, is this, that those *affections* and *appetites* of the soul, which have the strongest influence upon it, to encline and byass it in all its choices, to wit, *the Appetites* belonging properly to the *sensitive part of man's nature*, are not at all moved, or gratified by any thing in duty, considered barely as *duty*, and therefore, as so considered, it is not a sufficient *motive* to induce men to the practice of it. Now this reason also, I conceive carries its *own evidence* with it. For the soul of man (as the present state of na-

ture is) generally *moves*, as those forementioned *appetites* and *affections* shall *incline* it; and therefore, if that which thus *inclines* it, be not, some way or other, first made sure of, all persuasions addressed immediately to the will itself, are like to find but a very cold reception.

I shall not here insist upon the division of the appetites of the soul into the *rational* and *sensitive*, the *superior* and *inferior*, and much less shall I trace them into any farther subdivisions: But shall only observe, that there is one general, comprehensive *appetite*, or rather *ratio appetendi*, common to all the particular appetites, and into which the several operations of each of them are resolved; and that is, the great appetite of *jucundum*, or tendency of the whole soul to *that which pleases*. For whether they be properly the desires of the *rational part*, or the desires and inclinations of the *sensitive*, they all concur, and meet in this, that they tend to, and terminate in something, that may please and delight them.

But now I have already shewn, that *bare duty* and *virtue* are rather attended with difficulty and *hardship*, than seasoned, and set off with pleasure; and, for that cause, are commonly looked upon but as *dry things*; and consequently such, as need to have something of *relish* put into them, by the assignation of a *pleasing reward*;

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ward; which may so recommend, and gild the *bitter pill*, as to reconcile it to this great appetite, and thereby convey, and slide it into *the will*, as a proper object of its choice.

Nay, and I shall proceed farther, and add, that *duty*, upon these grounds, is then most effectually proposed, when it is not only seconded *with a reward*, but also with a *reward sensibly represented*; and (so far, as the nature of the thing will bear) with all the conditions of *allurement and delight*; that so it may be able to counterbalance the contrary suggestions of sense, which beat so strongly upon the imagination. Upon which account, as *Moses* enforced the observation of *his law* upon the *Israelites*, by *rewards* most suitable, and adapted to sense; as consisting of *temporal promises*; (though couching under them, I confess, spiritual and more sublime things;) so *Christ* himself, though the *rewards* promised by him to his followers were all of them heavenly and *spiritual*, yet he vouchsafed oftentimes to express them, by such objects, as most affected the *sense*. As for instance: The *enjoyments of the other world* are shadowed, and set forth to us in the Gospel, by *drinking wine in the kingdom of heaven*, Luke xxii. 18. And by *the mirth and festivities of a marriage feast*, Matth. xxii. 4. Also by *sitting upon thrones*, Matth. xix. 28. Likewise by *dwelling*

in palaces adorned with pearls and diamonds, and all kind of precious stones, Rev. xxi. 19, 20, 21. And lastly, by the continual singing of triumphal songs, Rev. xi. 3. and xix. 1. All which are some of the most lively and exalted instances of pleasure, that fall within the enjoyment of sense in this world. And this way of expression was most wisely made use of by our Saviour, for that the pleasures of the sensitive inferior appetites, though they are not in themselves the best objects, yet are certainly the best representations and conveyances of such objects to the mind; since without some kind of sensible dress, things too fine for mens apprehensions, can never much work upon their affections.

And upon the same ground, we may observe also, that those virtues are the most generally and easily practised, which do least thwart, and oppose these appetites. As for example, *veracity in speaking truth; faithfulness in not violating a trust; and justice in punishing offenders, or rendering to every one his due, are much more frequent in the world, than temperance, sobriety, and chastity, and other such virtues, as are properly conversant about abridging the pleasures of the senses.*

So then, if this be the case, that the soul of man, in all its choices, is naturally apt to be determined by *pleasure, and the sensitive, inferior appetites*

appetites (which would draw it off from duty) are continually plying it with such suitable and taking pleasures; doubtless, there is no way for duty to prevail, and get ground of them, but by *bidding higher*, and offering the soul *greater gratifications* wrapped up in an eternal reward. For *when* an adversary is ready to *bribe* the judge, and the judge is as ready to be bribed; assuredly, there is no way so likely to carry the cause, as to out-bribe him. The sensitive *part* or *principle* in all the pressing, enticing offers it makes to the soul, must either be *gained and taken off from alluring*, or be *conquered and out-done* in it. The former of which can never be effected, but the latter *may*; and that by no other means, than by representing duty as cloathed with such great and taking rewards, that the soul shall stand convinced, that there will be really a greater, and more satisfactory *pleasure in the consequents of duty*, (how hard soever it may appear at present) than there can be in the freest, and most unlimited fruition of the greatest, sensual delights.

But now, should we proceed upon the contrary principle, requiring obedience without recompence; how *lame* and *successless* would every precept of the divine *law* prove, when thus proposed *to us naked* and stripped of all that may either strengthen or recommend it?

Would not such a forlorn *nakedness* represent it, as coming rather *to beg*, than *to command*? And to ask an *alms*, than to impose a *duty*? For suppose, that when God bids us *fast* and *pray*; *abstain* from all the allurements of sensual *pleasure*; *deny ourselves*; being *smote* upon one *cheek*, *turn the other*; and lastly, *choose death*, rather than commit the *least known sin*. Suppose, I say, that God should command us all these severe things, upon no other account, but because they are excellent actions, high strains of virtue, most pleasing to God, and upon that score both commanded by him, and to be performed by us. Certainly these considerations (notwithstanding all the reason and truth that is in them) would yet strike the will but very faintly: For men care not for *suffering*, while they think it is only for *suffering-sake*. And *self-denial* is but a *sour morsel*, and will hardly go down without something to *sweeten* it; and men generally have but a *small appetite to pray*, and a much smaller to *fast*, (how great soever they may have after it.) On the contrary therefore, let us, in this case, take our measures from the addresses made by our Saviour himself to the minds of men; *Blessed* (says he to his disciples) *are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for*
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my sake; rejoice, and be exceeding glad. But why I pray? Was it such matter of joy, either to be *spit*, or *trampled* upon? To be aspersed by men's *tongues*, or crushed under *their heels*? No certainly, but we have a very good reason given us for all this, in the next words: *For great (says our Saviour) is your reward in heaven, Matth. v. 12.* And again, *Blessed are they that mourn.* But surely not for the bare *flendi voluptas*; nor for any such great desirableness, that there is or can be in *tears* or *groans*, any more than in that which causes them. No, but for something else, that was abundantly able to make amends for all these *sadnesses*, in the 5th and 6th *verses* of the same chapter. *For such (says our Saviour) shall be comforted:* Which one word implies in it all the felicity and satisfaction that human nature is capable of. But now had our Saviour, in defiance of all their *natural inclinations*, pressed the austerities upon them, as the sole and sufficient *reason* and *reward* of *themselves*, surely he had done like one, who neither understood the nature of man's will, nor the true *arts of persuasion*. And the case had been much the same, as if *Moses*, instead of giving the *Israelites water*, had bid them quench their *thirst with the rock*. Let this therefore be the second reason, *Why duty considered barely as duty, and*

abstracted from all reward, is not sufficient to induce men to the practice of it.

3. The *third and last reason*, that I shall alledge for the same, is this; *that if duty*, considered barely in itself, ought to be the sole motive to duty, without *any respect to a subsequent reward*, then those two grand affections of *hope and fear* ought to have no influence upon men, so as to move or engage them to the acts of duty at all. The consequence is most clear; because the proper objects, upon which these affections are to be employed, are *future rewards*, and *future punishments*; and therefore, if no *regard* ought to be had of these in matters of duty; it will follow, that neither must those affections, which are wholly conversant about *rewards*, have any thing to do about *duty*, wherein no considerations of a *reward* ought, upon this principle, to take place. This, I say, would be the genuine, unavoidable consequence of this doctrine.

But now, should any one venture to own such an odd and absurd paradox, in any of those sober, rational parts of *Christendom*, which have not depraved their *judging* and *discerning* faculties with those *strange, newfound, ecstatick* notions of religion, which some (who call themselves Christians, and *Christians of the highest form too*) have, in the late *super-reforming* age,
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taken up amongst us; how unnatural, or rather indeed, how romantick would such divinity appear! For all the world acknowledges, that *hope* and *fear* are the two great handles, by which the will of man is to be taken hold of, when we would either draw it *to duty*, or draw it off *from sin*. They are the strongest, and most efficacious means to bring such things home to the will, as are principally apt to move and work upon it. And the greatest, the noblest, and most renowned actions, that were ever atchieved upon the face of the earth, have first moved upon the spring of a projecting hope, carrying the mind above all present discouragements, by the prospect of some glorious and future good.

And therefore he, who, to bring men to do their duty heartily, and vigorously, and to the best advantages of Christianity, shall cut off *all rewards* from it, and so remove the proper materials which *hope* should exert itself upon, does just as if a man should direct another to shoot *right* and *true*, by forbidding him to take aim at the *mark*; or, as if we should bring a man to a *race*, and first tie his *legs* fast, or cut them off, and then clap him on the back, and bid him *run*. He who takes away the *incitements* to duty, dashes the *performance* of duty, and not the performance only, but the very attempt also;

also : For men do not use to *run*, only that *they may run*, but that *they may obtain*; labour itself being certainly one of the worst rewards of a man's *pains*. And therefore no wonder, if every *exhortation* to virtue has just so much strength in it, as there is in the *argument* brought to enforce it. For, if we will be but true to the first principles of *nature*, we shall find, that all arguments made use of to persuade the mind of man, must be founded upon something that is *grateful*, *acceptable*, and *pleasing to nature*; and that in short, is a man's easy and comfortable enjoyment of himself, in all the *powers*, *faculties*, and *affections*, both of *his soul and body*. Which said enjoyment in the hard and dry strokes of *duty and spiritual day labour*, (as I may call it) I am sure is not to be found. For no man *enjoys* himself, while he is *spending his spirits*, and employing the utmost intention of his mind upon such objects, as shall both put and keep it upon the *stretch*; which yet, in the performance of duty, every one actually does, or at least, should do. In a word, *irksomeness* in the whole course of an action, and *weariness* after it, certainly are not *fruition*; but the *actions of bare duty* are naturally accompanied with both.

Let us, therefore, here once again observe the course taken by our Saviour himself, when
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he would raise men up to something singular and extraordinary, and above the common pitch of duty: As in *Mark* x. 21. we find, how he answered the *rich young heir*, enquiring of him the way to heaven. Go (says he) and sell whatsoever thou hast, and give it all to the poor. Now certainly, had our Saviour stopped here, this had been as grinding, and as stripping a command, as could have well passed upon a man; and might indeed have seemed, not so much a command to *prove*, as an artifice to *blow him up*; not so much a *test*, to try his obedience, as a *trick* (like *some oaths*) to worm him out of his estate. But surely, our Saviour never affected to be *king of beggars*, and much less to *make men beggars*, the better to *king it over them*. Nor can we imagine, that he who was all *wisdom* and *goodness*, would have so far contradicted both, as to make it a *duty to give alms*, and at the same time put men into a condition fit only to *receive them*, or that he would have enjoined so great a *paradox in practice*, as to require his followers to choose *poverty* merely for *poverty's sake*; or to sell their *possessions*, only to buy *hunger* and *rags*, *scorn* and *contempt* with the price of them. No; assuredly, the *God of nature* would never have put a man upon any thing so contrary to the first principles of *nature*. And therefore

our Saviour did not require this young man here absolutely to *quit his riches*, but only to *exchange* them, and to part with a less estate in *possession*, for a greater in *reversion*, with a small *enjoyment* for a vast *hope*, in those following words; *Do this, (says he) and thou shalt have treasure in heaven*: So that he proposed the *duty* in one word, and the *reward* in another. And it was this alone, which made our Saviour's *proposal* (which looked so terribly at first) fair and rational; and which, without such a *reward* annexed to it, would, upon the strictest, and most impartial discourses of *reason* and *nature*, have been thrown back as cruel and intolerable.

And again, when our Saviour preached to the world the grand evangelical duty *taking up the cross*; we do not find, that he made the meer burden of *bearing* it, any argument *for the taking it up*; no certainly, such arguments might have pressed hard upon their *shoulders*, but very little upon their *reason*. And therefore, in *Mark* x. 29, 30. *There is no man, (says he) who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my sake, and the gospel's; but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, and in the world to come eternal life*. So that we see here the *antecedent* smoothed over, and

and recommended by the *consequent*; *duty* and *reward* walking hand in hand; the *riches* of the *promise* still over-matching the *rigours* of the *precept*, and (as we observe in the royal diadems of Christian kings) the *cross* and the *crown* put together.

But above all, the example of the great *author and finisher of our faith himself* will put the point here before us past all dispute. For are not *his enduring the cross, and despising the shame*, (and this latter as terrible a *crucifixion* to the *mind*, as the other could be to the *body*) both of them resolved *into the joy that was set before him*? Hebr. xii. 2. And did not our Saviour teach us by his *example*, as well as by his *precept*? At least so far, that what he did, was certainly lawful to be done; though, by reason of the immense disparity of his condition and ours, not always necessary for us to do. But however, as to the case now spoken of, it was manifestly the subsequent joy which baffled and disarmed the *present pain*, and the prospect of a glorious immortality, which carried him triumphant through all those agonies, which bare mortality must otherwise have sunk under.

It has been observed, and that with great wit and reason, that in all encounters of dangerous and dreadful issue, *it is still the eye which*

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is first overcome; and being so, presently spreads a terror throughout the whole man: Accordingly, on the contrary, where the eye is emboldned with the encouraging view of some vast enjoyment pressing close upon the heels of a present suffering, it diffuses such a noble bravery and courage into all the faculties, both of soul and body, as makes them overlook all dangers; and by overlooking, conquer and get above them. In a word, let us so eye the *great captain of our salvation*, as to rest assured of this, that, wheresoever he *went before*, it is both our privilege, and our safety *to follow*; and that his example alone is enough both to *justify*, and to *glorify* the imitation.

But to proceed; as we have shewn, how our Saviour has sometimes thought fit to *draw men* to their duty by *their hopes*, so let us see, in the next place, how he sometimes also, *drives them* to it by their *fears*. *Fear not those* (says he) *who can but kill the body, but fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matth. x. 28. And again, in *Luke xii. 5.* he enforces the same words with this emphatical repetition; *Yea I say unto you fear him*. But now, if the *fear of hell* influencing a man either to the practice of duty, or the avoidance of sin, were the direct *way to hell*, (as some with equal *confidence and ignorance* have affirmed)

ed) surely, our Saviour took the most preposterous course that could be, to prescribe *the fear of hell*, as the surest means to escape it. For how can there be any such thing as *fleeing from the wrath to come*, if *fear*, which is the only thing that can make men *flee*, shall betray them into that which they *flee from*?

But farther, to descend from the method used by Christ himself to that made use of by his Apostles. What means St. Peter, to put men upon *passing the time of their sojourning here in fear*? 1 Pet. i. 17. And S. Paul, to press men upon *working out their salvation with fear and trembling*? Phil. ii. 12. For *fear and trembling* are certainly very senseless things, where a man is not at all the better for them. But these experienced guides (it seems) very well knew how impossible it was, where the concern was infinite and unspeakable, and the danger equal, for any man of sense and reason to shake off *his fears*, and retain *his wits* too. And therefore, to me it seems none of the smallest arguments against the modern whimsy, which we are now opposing, that both in the language of *the old testament and the new*, the whole business of religion is still comprehended and summed up in this one great thing, *the fear of God*. For this we may assure ourselves of, that he who fears as he should do in
this

this world, shall have nothing either to *fear* or *feel* in the next.

And now lastly, to set off the foregoing authorities with the manifest *reason of the thing itself*: It is, doubtless, one of the greatest absurdities, that can well fall within the thoughts of man, to imagine, that God, who has cast the business of man's salvation into so large a compass, as to share out to every other faculty and affection of the soul its due part and proportion in this great work, should yet wholly disinterest those two noble leading affections of *hope and fear*, from having any thing to do in the same. For must these only lie idle and fallow, while all the other affections of the mind are employed and taken up? And has God something for *us to love*, and something to *bate*, but in the whole business of *religion*, nothing for us *to hope for*, and nothing *to fear*? Which surely he has not, if it be absolutely unlawful for men *under the gospel*, in any religious performance, to act with an eye to a *future recompence*. And therefore, since this assertion, to wit, *that duty, considered barely as duty, ought to be the sole motive to the practice of it*, brings us under a necessity of asserting also, *that hope and fear ought not at all to influence men in the matter of duty*; which yet is most absurd: And since nothing that is ab-

surd or false, can, by genuine and just consequence, issue from what *is true*; it follows, that the former assertion, or position from which this latter is inferred, is most false and irrational. Which was the thing to be proved. And so

I proceed to answer such *objections*, as may with any colour of argument be alledged in opposition to the doctrine hitherto laid down and defended by us, and so conclude this first proposition : As,

1. It may be argued, that there is a certain *complacency* and *serenity of mind* attending the performance of actions pious and virtuous, and a kind of *horror* or *remorse* that follows the neglect of them, or the doing of the quite contrary; the consideration of which alone, setting aside all farther *hopes of a future reward*, may be a sufficient argument to enforce the practice of *duty* upon any sober, rational mind whatsoever.

To this I answer, that this *complacency* of mind upon a man's *doing* his duty on the one side, and that *remorse* attending his *neglect* of it, or doing the quite contrary on the other, are so far from excluding *a respect to a future recompence*, or being a different motive from it, that they do really *imply* it, and are principally founded in it; the *said complacency* flowing na-

turally from the *assurance* given a man by his conscience, that the *honesty* and *goodness* of his actions sets him *free* and *safe* from all that evil and punishment, which the *law of God* awards to the transgressors of it. And the contrary *remorse* of mind proceeding chiefly from a *dread* of those punishments, which a man's conscience assures him, that the *breach* of the said law will render the *breakers* of it obnoxious to. And that this is so, is demonstrable by this one reason; that several men are differently affected; either with this *complacency*, or *remorse of mind*, upon their doing the very same action; and that because *some* are verily persuaded, that the said action is a *sin*, and so to be followed with the penal consequents of *sin*; and *others*, on the contrary, are as fully persuaded, that it is *no sin*. For the better illustration, and proof of which, we must observe, that mens judgments concerning *sin*, have been, and in several parts of the world, still are very different; so that what is *sin* with one people or nation, is not always so with another: As for instance, some account *drunkenness* no sin, as many of the *Germans*; and others have had the same thoughts of *theft*, as the *Spartans*; and of *fornication*, as most of the *Heathens*; and some again think, that an *officious lye* is no sin, as the *Jesuites* and *Socinians*: Whereas others, on the

the contrary, stand as fully persuaded, that all these are *sins*, (as indeed they are, and most of them very gross ones too) and such, as unrepented of, will assuredly consign over the persons guilty of them to eternal punishment, from the hands of a sin-revenging justice.

But now, upon these two so different, pre-conceived opinions, it will, and must certainly follow, that those of the latter judgment cannot but feel that horror and remorse of mind upon the doing of these actions, which those of the contrary persuasion, to wit, *that they are no sins*, undoubtedly, upon the very same actions, do not feel. But now, from whence can this be? Surely, not from the *bare action* itself, nor from any thing naturally adherent to it; forasmuch as the *action*, with all that is natural to it, is the same in both those sorts of men, whose minds, after the doing of it, are so differently affected. And therefore, it must needs be from the *different* infusions into, and prepossessions of men in their minority, and first education; by which some have been taught, that a severe *punishment*, and after-reckoning, belongs to such and such actions; and by which others again have been taught, that they are actions in themselves indifferent, and to which no penalty at all is due.

I conclude therefore, that the *complacency*, which men find, upon the performance of their duty, and the *remorse* which they feel upon the neglect of it, taken abstractedly from all consideration of a *future reward*, cannot be a *sufficient motive to duty*; because, indeed so taken, they are but a meer fiction or chimera. For that all such *complacency and remorse* are founded only upon an early persuasion wrought into mens minds of a *following retribution of happiness or misery* allotted to men hereafter, according to the different nature and quality of their actions here: And so much in answer to this first exception. But,

2. Some again object and argue, that there is a *different spirit* required under the Gospel, from that which was either *under* or *before* the *Mosaick* dispensation; and therefore, though it might be *lawful* and allowable enough for the church in those days, living under an *inferior æconomy*, in all acts of duty *to have respect to the recompence of reward*; yet in times of higher, and more spiritual attainments, and under a *Gospel-state*, men ought wholly to act, and to be acted by such a *filial and free spirit*, as never to enter upon any duty with the least regard to an *after-compensation*; this being *servile, legal, and mercenary*; as these *sons of perfection* do pretend.

But

But to this also I answer, that the *Jewish church*, and the *church before it*, may be considered under a double character or capacity. (1.) As they sustained the peculiar *formality* of a church so or so constituted. And (2.) as they were men, or rational creatures, as the rest of mankind *are*.

Now it must be confessed, that what belonged to them in the former *capacity* was undoubtedly proper and peculiar to them, and so neither does, nor ought to conclude the church now-a-days, being cast into a *different form* or *constitution*. Nevertheless, what belonged to them, *simply as they were men*, or moral agents, equally belongs to, and concerns the church in all places, and all ages of the world, and under all *forms, models, and administrations* whatsoever.

But now, for any one in the works of duty, to proceed upon *hopes of a reward*, is (as I have already shewn) the result of a *rational nature*, endued with such faculties of mind, as, according to their *natural way of acting*, especially as the state of *nature* now is) will hardly, or *never* be brought to apply heartily to *duty*, but in the strength of such *motives*; the very nature of man inclining him *chiefly*, if not *solely*, to act upon such terms and conditions; so that to *do one's duty with regard to a following recompence*, concerns not men under any *peculiar denomi-*

tion of *Jews* or *Christians*, but simply as they are *men*. And to affirm the contrary, is a direct passing over to the heresy and dotage of the *Sadducees*, who by mistaking and perverting that saying of *Zadock*, the author of their sect and name, to wit, (*That men ought to do virtuously without any thought of a following recompence*) carried it to that height of irreligion, as to deny all *rewards of happiness* or *misery* in another world; and consequently, a *resurrection* to another life after this. Such horrid and prophane inferences were drawn, or rather dragged by these hereticks from one unwary and misunderstood *expression*.

Nevertheless, so much is, and must be granted, (and no doubt, *Zadock* himself, if there was such an one, never intended more) that for a man, in the practice of duty, to act *solely* and *entirely* from a desire of a following recompence, *exclusively* to all love of the work and duty itself, is indeed servile and mercenary, and no ways suitable to that *filial temper*, which ought to govern all Christian minds. But then again, we must remember, that to *do one's duty only for a reward*, and *not to be willing to do it without one*, are very different things. And if we consider even *Judas* himself, it was not his *carrying the bag*, while he followed his Master, but his following his Master, only that he *might carry the bag*,

which made him a *thief and an hireling*. For otherwise, I cannot see, why he might not have been every whit as lawfully his Master's *almoner*, as he was one of his *Apostles*; and have *carried his bag* with the same duty, with which he might have *carried his cross*.

But now, if we shall drive the matter so far, as to make it *absolutely unchristian* for a man, in the practice of duty, to have any design at all upon a *future reward*, why then (as I may speak with reverence) does not God, in the conversion of a sinner, new-model his very essence, cashier and lop off the natural affections of hope and fear? And why does he also promise us *heaven and glory*, if it be not lawful for us to *pursue* what he is pleased to *promise*? For are these promises made to quicken our *endeavours*, or to debase and spoil our *performances*? To be *helps*, or rather *snare*s to our obedience? All which, if it be both absurd and impious for any one to imagine, then it will follow that this, and the like *exceptions*, from which such paradoxes are inferred, must needs also fall to the ground as false, and not to be defended.

But before I make an end of this first proposition it may not be amiss to consider a little the temper of those *seraphick pretenders to religion*, who have presumed to refine upon it by such airy, impracticable notions, and have made such

a mighty noise with their *gospel-spirits*, and *gospel-dispensations*, their *high attainments*, and *wonderful illuminations*, screwing up matters to such an height, that there is no hope of being a *Christian*, without being something more than a *man*. For so, I am sure, ought he to be, who, in the doing of his duty, must not be suffered to expect, or look for any reward after it; nor, in his way to heaven, so much as to think of the place which he is going to. I say, if we consider the temper of these high-flyers, (who would needs impose such a *new Christianity* upon the world) are they themselves *all spirit and life*, all *Christianity sublimated*, (as I may so express it)? Are they nothing but *self-denial* and *divine love*? *Nothing but a pure ascending flame*, without any mixture or communication with these lower elements? I must confess, I could never yet find any such thing in this sort of men; but on the contrary, have generally observed them to be as arrant worldlings, and as proud and selfish a generation of men, as ever disgraced the name of Christianity by wearing it; and far from giving any other proof, that in all their religious performances they never act with an eye to a *future reward*, but only *this one*, that having wholly fastened their eyes, their hands, and their hearts also, upon *this world*, they cannot possibly, at the same time,

time, place them upon another too. On the other side therefore, not to aspire to such *heights and elevations in religion*, (or rather indeed *above it*;) since God, of his abundant goodness, has been pleased to invite, and even court us to our duty with such liberal and glorious *rewards*, let us neither despise *his grace*, nor be wiser than *his methods*; but with arms as open to *take*, as his are to *give*, let us embrace the motives he has afforded us, as so many springs and wheels to our obedience. And whosoever shall piously, constantly, and faithfully do his duty with hopes of the *promised recompence*, shall find, that God will not fail to make good that promise to him *hereafter*, by an humble dependence upon which he was brought to do his duty *here*: And so much for our *first and main proposition*. The

II. Which (as I shew before) was in a manner included in the *first*, and so scarce needs any prosecution distinct from it, is this;

That the proposal of a reward on God's part, and a respect had to it on man's, are undoubtedly necessary to engage men in a course of duty and obedience.

For the discussion of which, I shall briefly do these two things.

1. I shall shew, in what *respect* these are said to be *necessary*.

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2. I shall shew, why, and upon what *reasons*, they ought to be accounted so.

1. And first, for the necessity of them. A thing may be said to be *necessary* two ways. As,

(1.) When by the very essence or nature of it, it is such, that it implies in it a *contradiction*, and consequently an *impossibility*, even by the power of God himself, that (the said nature continuing) it should be otherwise. And thus, I shall never presume to affirm, (though *some* I know do) that God cannot induce a man (being a *free agent*) to a course of duty and obedience, without *proposing a competent reward* to such obedience. For I question not, but God can so qualify, and *determine the will* of a rational agent, (and that without the least diminution to its *natural freedom*) that the inclination and byas of it shall wholly propend to good, and that from a mere love of goodness itself, without any consideration of a *farther recompence*. And the reason of this is, because *all good*, as such is in its degree a *proper object* for the will to choose; and whatsoever is a *proper object* of its choice, is also *sufficient* to draw forth, and determine the actings of it, unless there interpose some stronger *appetible*, to rival or overmatch it in its choice: And yet even in this case also, God, no doubt, can so strengthen

en the propensity of the will to good, that it shall have no appetite to, or relish for the pleasures of *sense* at all; and consequently shall need no proposal, either of reward or punishment, to draw it off from the *choice* and *pursuit* of those things, which the grace of God has already given it such an entire aversion to. For this, questionless, is the present condition of the Angels, and other glorified spirits, whose *will* is so absolutely determined to *good*, as to be without any *proneness*, or *disposition* at all to *evil*; and what condition they are in at present, God, we may be sure, by his omnipotence, could have created man in at first, and have preserved him in ever since, had he been so pleased; so that there is nothing in the thing itself *impossible*. But this, I own, affects not immediately the case now before us. And therefore in the

(2.) *Place*: A thing may be said to be *necessary*, not *absolutely*, but with *respect to that particular state and condition*, in which it is. And thus, because God has actually so cast the present condition of man, as to make his *inclination to good* but *imperfect*, and during this life to continue it so, and withall, to place him among such *objects*, as are mightily apt to draw him off from what is *morally good*, it was necessary, (upon the supposal of such a condition)

tion) that, if God would have men effectually *choose good and avoid evil*, he should suggest to them some farther *motives to good, and arguments against evil*, than what the bare consideration of the things themselves prohibited, or commanded by him, can afford. For otherwise, that which is *morally good*, meeting with so faint and feeble an inclination in the *will* towards it, will never be able to make any prevailing impression upon *that leading faculty*. From all which you see, in what sense we affirm it *necessary for God to propose rewards to men*, thereby to *engage them to their duty*; namely, because of that *imperfect estate*, which God has been pleased to leave men under in this world.

And now, in the next place, for the *proof* of this *necessity*, (which was the other thing proposed by us) these *two general reasons* may be offered.

(1.) *The first taken from clear evidence of scripture.* And the

(2.) *From the constant avowed practice of all the wise lawgivers of the world.*

(1.) And first for *scripture*. It has been more than sufficiently proved from thence already, how deplorably unable the heart of man is, not only *to conquer*, but even to contend with the difficulties of *a spiritual course*, with-

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out a steady view of such *promises*, as may supply new *life*, *spirit*, and *vigour* to its obedience. To all which, let it suffice, at present, to add that full, and notable declaration of St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 19. *That if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable.* And certainly, for a man to know, that by being a *Christian*, he should be of all men most miserable, was as untoward an argument, (should we look no farther) to persuade him to be a *Christian*, as could well have been thought of. So that we see here how those *adepti*, those *men of perfection*, before spoken of, (who scorn to be religious out of any respect to a future reward) are already got a pitch above the third heaven; and far beyond the utmost perfection, that St. Paul himself ever pretended to. But

(2.) The other proof of the same assertion shall be taken from the practice of all the *noted lawgivers* of the world; who have still found it necessary to back and fortify their laws with *rewards and punishments*; these being the very strength and finew of the *law*, as the *law* itself is of *government*.

No wise ruler ever yet ventured the peace of society upon the goodness of men's nature, or the virtuous inclination of their temper. Nor was any thing *truly great and extraordinary* ever

almost atchieved, but in the strength of some reward every whit *as great and extraordinary* as the action which it carried a man out to. Thus it was in the vertue of *Saul's* high promises, that *David* encountered *Goliath*: The *giant* indeed was the mark he shot, or rather *slung* at; but the *king's daughter*, and the court preferments, were the mark he most probably aimed at. For we read how inquisitive he was, *what should be done for him*. And it is not unknown, how in the case of a scrupulous *oath-sick* conscience also, *promise of preferment* has been found the ablest *casuist* to resolve it; from which, and the like passages both ancient and modern, if we look farther into the *politicks* of the *Greeks* and the *Romans*, and other nations of remark in history, we shall find, that whenever the laws enjoined any thing *harsh*, and to the doing of which men were naturally averse, they always thought it requisite to add *allurement* to *obligation*, by declaring a noble recompence (possibly some large *pension*, or *gainful office*, or *title of honour*) to the meritorious doers of whatsoever should be commanded them; and when again, on the other side, the law forbad the doing of any thing, which men were otherwise mightily inclined to do, they were still forced to call in aid from the *rods* and the *axes*, and other terrible inflictions, to secure the

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the authority of the prohibition against the *bent* and *fury* of the contrary inclination. And this course, being founded in the very nature of *men* and things, was, and is as necessary to give force and efficacy to the *divine laws* themselves, as to any human laws whatsoever. For in vain do we think to find any man virtuous enough *to be a law to himself*, or any law strong enough to enforce and drive home its own obligation; or lastly, the prerogative of any *law-giver* high enough to assure to him the subjects obedience. For men generally affect to be caressed and encouraged, and (as it were) *bought to their duty*, (as well as from it too sometimes.) For which, and the like causes, when God, by *Moses*, had set before his own people a large number of the most excellent, and (as one would think) self-recommending precepts on the one hand, and a black roll of the very worst and vilest of sins on the other, (sins that seemed to carry their *punishment* in their very commission;) yet nevertheless, in the issue, God found it needful to bring up the rear of all with those decretory words, in *Deut. xxx. 19. Behold, I have this day set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.* And what he then set before the *Israelites*, he now sets *before us* and the *whole world* besides; and when we shall have well weighed the nature of the things set
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before us, and considered *what life is, and what death is*, I suppose we shall need neither *instruction, nor exhortation*, to which of the two we should direct our *choice*.

And now, to close up all, and to relieve your patience, you have heard the point stated and argued, and the objections against it answered; after all which, what can we so naturally infer from this whole discourse, as the infinite concern, lying upon every man, to fix to himself such *a principle to act by*, as may effectually bring him to that great and beatifick end, which he came into the world for?

This is most certain, that no man's *practice* can rise higher than *his hopes*. It is observed in *aqueducts*, that no pipe or conduit can force the current of the water higher than the spring-head itself lies, from whence the water first descends. In like manner, it is impossible for a man, who designs to himself only the *rewards of this world*, to act in the strength thereof, at such a rate, as shall bring him *to a better*. And the reason of this is, because whosoever makes these present enjoyments his whole design, accounts them absolutely the best things he can have, and accordingly he looks no farther, he expects no better; and if so, it is not to be imagined, that he should ever obtain, what he never so much as looked for: For no man shall come to heaven by chance.

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As for *trials and temptations*, (those fatal rocks, which the souls of men are so apt to dash upon) we may take this for an intallible rule concerning them; namely, *that nothing in this world can support a man against such trials, as shall threaten him with the utter loss of this world.* For the truth is, it would imply a contradiction to suppose that it could; and yet these are the trials, which even wise men so much fear, and prepare for, and know, that they shall sink under and perish by, unless borne up by something mightier and greater than the world; and therefore, not to be found in it.

What farther trials God may have in reserve for us, we cannot tell; only this we may reckon upon as a *certain*, though *sad* truth; that there has been a mighty growing guilt upon this nation for several years. And as great guilts naturally *portend*, as well as *provoke* great judgments; so God knows, how soon the *black cloud*, which has been so long gathering over us, may break, and pour down upon us; and how near we may be to times, in which, he who will *keep* his conscience, must expect to *keep* nothing else.

For nothing, certainly, can cast a more dreadful aspect upon us, than those monstrous crying *immoralities* lately broke in amongst us;

by which, not only the *English* virtue, but the very *English* temper, seems utterly to have left us; while, to the terror of all pious minds, *foreign vices* have invaded us; which threaten us more, than any *foreign armies* can.

As for our excellent church, which has been so maligned, and struck at on all hands, and we of this place especially; and that by some, whom we had little cause to expect such stabs from, (to their just and eternal infamy be it spoke :) * We have been moreover told, and that with spite and insolence enough, *That our possessions and privileges are very precarious*, (though yet, thanks be to God, and to our ancient government, confirmed to us, by all that this nation calls *law*;) and withall, *that our reign will be very short*, (as no doubt, if *republicans* might have their will, the reign of *all kings*, even of king *William* himself, would be so too.) But still, blessed be the Almighty we are in his hands; and whatsoever his most wise providence may bring upon us, we know upon what terms our great lord and master will deal with us; having so fully declared himself, as to all these critical turns and trials of our obedience, in *Rev. ii. 10.* *Be thou faithful*

* See a virulent, insulting pamphlet, entitled, *A letter to a member of parliament*, &c. page 14, and 52. Printed in the year 1697, and as like the author himself *W. W.* as malice can make it.

Serm. 5. *of the Reward.* 211

unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
God enable us to be the former, by a steady,
unshaken hope of the latter.

*To which God be rendered and ascribed, as
is most due, all praise, might, majesty,
and dominion, both now and for ever-
more. Amen.*

SERMON VI.

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On the General Resurrection.

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SERMON VI.

On the General Resurrection.

ACTS xxiv. 15.

Having hope towards God, (which they themselves also allow) that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

THE most wise Creator of the universe has so formed one world, that it is not to be governed without the help of another; nor the actions of the life here, to be kept in order, without the hopes and fears of one hereafter. The truth is, next to God himself, hopes and fears govern all things. They act by a kind of royal deputation under him, and are so without controul, that they carry all before them, by an absolute, unlimited sway.

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For so long as God governs the world, (which will be as long as there is a world to govern) law must govern under him, and the sanction of rewards and punishments must be that which enables the law itself to govern : Human nature of itself being, by no means, so well disposed, as to make its duty the sole motive or measure of its obedience.

For as in other cases, so here, it is not so much the hand which *binds*, as the bond or chain with which it binds, which must make good its hold, upon the thing or person so bound by it. Every man, in all that concerns him, stands influenced by his hopes and fears, and those by rewards and punishments, the proper and respective objects thereof ; and the divine law is the grand adamantyne ligament, tying both of them fast together ; by assuring rewards to our hopes, and punishments to our fears ; so that man being thus bound by the peremptory, irreverfible decree of heaven, must by vertue thereof, indispensably obey or suffer ; the sentence of the law being universal and perpetual, either of a work to be *done*, or a penalty to be *endured*.

But whether it be from the nature or fate of mankind, it is no small matter of wonder, that men of all creatures should have such an averfeness to obey, and such a proneness to dis-

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obey his Maker, that nothing under an eternity of happiness or misery (the first of them unspeakable, and the other of them intolerable) should be the means appointed to engage him to the *one*, or deter him from the other. And it is yet a greater wonder, that not only such a method of dealing with men should be thought *necessary*, but that in such innumerable instances it should be found not sufficient; at least not effectual to the end it is intended for; as the event of things too fatally demonstrates it not to be.

Nevertheless, since Almighty God has pitched upon this method of governing the world by rewards and punishments, a resurrection of the persons so to be rewarded or punished, must needs be granted absolutely and unavoidably necessary: Nothing in this life giving us a satisfactory account, that either the good or the bad have been yet dealt with according to the strict and utmost merit of their works: Which yet, the justice of an infinitely wise judge and governor having so positively declared his will in the case, cannot but insist upon. For albeit God, as *Creator of the world*, acted therein by an absolute, sovereign power, (always) under the conduct of infinite wisdom and goodness; yet, as *governor* of it, his justice is the prime attribute which he proceeds by, and the laws the grand instru-

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instruments whereby justice acts, as *rewards* and *punishments* are the things which give life, force, and efficacy to justice itself. Upon which grounds, the Apostle gives us a full account of the whole matter, in that excellent place, in 2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all, says he, appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Thus says the Apostle. But the dead, we know, as such, can receive no such things; nor are subjects capable of rewards or punishments: So that the sum of the Apostle's whole argument amounts to this: That as certainly as God governs the world wisely, and will one day judge it righteously, so certain is it, that there must be a general retribution, and, by consequence, a general resurrection.

In my discourse upon which, I shall cast the whole prosecution of the subject here to be treated of by us, under these three propositions, *viz.*

I. That a belief of a resurrection from the dead, is a thing exceeding difficult, strange, and harsh to the discourses of natural reason.

II. That notwithstanding this great difficulty, there is yet sufficient reason, and solid ground for the belief of it. And,

III. And *lastly*. That supposing a sufficiency of reason for this belief, all difficulties, and seeming repugnancies alledgible against it, do exceedingly advance the worth, value, and excellency of it.

Now under these three propositions shall be taken in all that we shall, or can say concerning the *general resurrection* at the last day. And accordingly, as to the first of the three propositions, importing the great difficulty, strangeness, and repugnancy of the article of the *resurrection* to the belief of natural reason, we find, moreover, in the text here pitched upon by us, that the main objection insisted upon by the principal of St. Paul's opposers, the *Sadducees*, against the doctrine preached by him, was drawn from this controverted point of the *resurrection*, and of the incredibility of the same, founded upon the supposed impossibility thereof; which, as it was a point of incomparably the greatest moment in the practice of religion, and consequently with the firmest steadiness to be assented to, and with equal zeal to be contended for, by our Apostle; so was it with no less heat and fierceness opposed and exploded by those his forementioned antagonists.

nists. In treating of which, I shall endeavour these two things :

1. To shew, that there is such an extraordinary averfeness in natural reason to the belief of a resurrection, as in the said proposition we have affirmed that there is.

2. To assign the causes from which this averfeness proceeds. And,

1. For the first of these. The surest and readiest way (I should think) to learn the verdict of reason in this matter, would be to proceed by the rule and standard of their judgment, who were the most acknowledged and renowned masters of reason and learning in the several ages of the world, the Philosophers ; persons who discoursed upon the bare principles of natural reason, and upon no higher ; who pretended not to revelation, but acquiesced in such discoveries, as nature, assisted with industry, and improved with hard study, could furnish them with. And this certainly was the best and likeliest way to state the *ne plus ultra* of reason, and to shew how far it could, and could not go, by shewing how far it had actually gone already. And the world has had experience in more sorts of learning than one, how much those, who have gone before, have surpassed in perfection, as well as Time, those who have come after them.

Now,

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Now, in the first rank of these great and celebrated *persons*, *Pythagoras* (the earliest, whom history reports to us to have been dignified with the title of *Philosopher*) asserted, and taught a *metempsychosis*, or *transmigration* of the same soul into several bodies; which is utterly inconsistent with a resurrection; the number of bodies upon these terms, in so great a proportion, exceeding the number of souls: One soul wearing out many bodies, as one body does many garments. So that the *Pythagorick* principle can admit of no resurrection, unless there could be as many souls as bodies to rejoin one another; which, upon this *Hypothesis*, cannot be.

Plato indeed speaks much of the immortality of the soul; but by not so much as mentioning the rising of the body again after its dissolution, (when yet he treated of so cognate a subject) we may rationally presume, that he knew nothing of it; and that amongst all his Ideas, (as I may so express it) he had none of such a resurrection.

Aristotle held an eternity of the world, *viz.* as to the heavens and the earth, the principal parts of it. But as to things mutable, he placed that eternity in the endless succession of individuals; which clearly shews, that he meant not, that those individuals should revive and return

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turn to an endless duration. For since he asserted this succession only to immortalize the kind or species, the immortality of particulars would have rendered that succession wholly needless.

As for the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans* who, I am sure, were reputed the subtlest and most acute of all the sects of Philosophers, we have them in *Acts* xvii. 32. *scoffing at the very mention of rising from the dead.* They thought it ridiculous for animated dust once dead to revive, or for man to be made or raised out of it, any more than once. For, if that might be, they reckoned that men could not properly be said to *die*, but rather only to *hold their breath* for some time, than totally to *lose* it; and that death might be called a *sleep* without a metaphor, if we might so soon shake it off, and *rise from it again.* In short, if *Zeno* or *Chrysippus* were alive, they would explode; and, if *Epicurus* himself should *rise from the dead*, he would scarce believe a *resurrection.*

But to pass from *Heathens* to those who had their reason farther improved by revelation, we have in the *Jewish* church a great, a learned, and considerable sect called the *Sadducees*, wholly discarding this article from their creed; as *St. Matthew* tells us, in *Matth.* xxii. 23. And *St. Luke*, in *Acts* xxiii. 8. *That the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, &c.* as, no doubt, it

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was their interest, (as well as belief) that there should be none.

And lastly, even for some of those, who professed Christianity itself, and that in the famous city of *Corinth*, where most of the galantry, the wit, and learned arts of *Greece* flourished, we find some Christians themselves denying it, as appears from that elaborate confutation, which *St. Paul* bestowed upon them, in the xvth chapter of his first epistle to the *Corinthians*.

Which instances, amongst several others assignable to the same purpose, may suffice to shew, how hardly this article finds credit with those who are led by principles of mere natural reason; and indeed, so strange and incredible does it appear to such, (and some others also, though professing higher principles) that the same power which God exerted in *raising Christ* from the *dead*, seems necessary to raise such sons of infidelity to a firm and thorough belief of it. And so I come to the

2. Thing proposed, *viz.* To assign the causes, why natural reason thus starts from the belief of a resurrection, and these may be reckoned of two sorts.

1. Such as are taken from the manifold *improbabilities*, rendring the matter so exceeding unlikely to the judgment of human reason, that

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that it cannot frame itself to a belief, that there is really any such thing. And,

2. Such as are drawn from the downright *impossibilities* charged upon it. Both which are to be considered. And

1. Those many great *improbabilities* and *unlikelihoods* alledged against the *resurrection* of the same numerical body, are apt to give a mighty check to the mind of man, in yielding its belief to it. For who would imagine, or could conceive, that when a body, by continual fraction and dissipation, is crumbled into millions of little atoms, some portions of it rarified into *air*, others sublimated into fire, and the rest changed into earth and water, the elements should after all this surrender back their spoils, and the several parts, after such a dispersion, should travel from all the four quarters of the world to meet together, and come to a mutual interview of one another, in one and the same individual body again? That God should summon a part out of this fish, that fowl, that beast, that tree, and remand it to its former place, to unite into a new combination for the rebuilding of a fallen edifice, and restoring an old, broken, demolished carcass to itself once more? So that, by such a continual circulation of life and death following upon one another, the grave should not become so much

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much a *conclusion*, as the *interruption*; not the *period*, but the *parenthesis* of our lives; a short interval between the present and the future, and only a passage to convey us from one life to another? These things, we must confess, are both difficult in the notion, and hard to our belief. For though, indeed, the word of truth has declared, that *all flesh is grass*, and man but as the *flower of the field*; yet the apprehensions of sense will hardly be brought to acknowledge, that he therefore grows upon his own grave, or springs afresh out of the ground. For can the jaws of death relent? or the grave (of all things) make restitution? Can filth and rottenness be the preparatives to glory? and dust, and ashes, the seed-plots of immortality? Is the sepulchre a place to dress ourselves in for heaven, the attiring room for corruption to put on incorruption, and to fit us for the beatifick vision? These are paradoxes which nature cannot well digest; mysteries, which it cannot fathom; being all of them such, as the common, universal observation of the world is wholly a stranger to.

And thus much for the first cause, which generally keeps men from a *belief of the resurrection*; namely, the great improbabilities and unlikelihoods attending it; but this is not all; there being yet another, and a greater ar-

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gument alledged against it, and that is in the

2. And next place, the downright *impossibilities charged upon it.* And this from the seemingly unanswerable contradictions and absurdities implied in it ; and (as some think) unavoidably consequent upon it. Of which, the chief, and most hardly reconcilable to the discourses of human reason, is founded in, and derivable *from*, the continual *transmutation* of one thing into another. For how extravagant soever the forementioned *Pythagorean* hypothesis of the *transmigration*, or metempsychosis of one soul into several bodies, may be justly accounted to be ; yet the *transmutation* of one body into another, ought not to be accounted so. For the parts of a body, we know, are in a continual flux, and the decays of nature are repaired by the daily substitution of new matter derived from our nutriment ; and when, at length, this body comes to be dissolved by death, it soon after returns to earth ; and that earth is animated into grass, and that grass turned into the substance of the beast which eats it, and that beast becomes food to man, and so, by a long percolation, is converted into his flesh and substance. So that such matter or substance, which was once an integral part of this man's body, perhaps twenty years after his death, by this round or circle of *perpetual transmutation*,

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comes to be an integral part of another man's. Now, if there be a resurrection, and every man shall be restored with his own numerical body, perfect and complete, we may propose our doubt in those words of the *Sadducees* to our Saviour, in *Matth.* xxii. 28. concerning the woman who had been married to several husbands successively : *To which of them shall she belong at the last day ? for all of them had her.* So may it be said of such a portion of *matter* or *substance*, which, by continual change, has been an integral part of several bodies : *To which of these bodies shall it be restored at the resurrection ?* For having successively belonged to each of them, either our bodies must not rise entire, or the same portion of substance and matter must be a part of several distinct bodies, and consequently, be in several *distinct places* at the same time, which is manifestly impossible.

Now the foundation of this argument, taken from the vicissitude, and mutual change of things into one another, is clear from obvious, and universally uncontested experience ; and being so, the restitution of every soul to its own respective body, and to every integral part of it, is a thing to which all principles of natural reason *seem* a contradiction ; and by consequence, (if so) not within the power of Om-

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nipotence to effect. I say, it *seems* so; and I will not presume to say more.

The consideration of which drove the *Socinians*, those known enemies to *natural*, as well as *revealed* religion, (whatsoever they *pretend* in contradiction to what they *assert*, in behalf of both) together with some others, peremptorily to deny, that men shall be raised with the same numerical bodies, which they had in this world, but with another, which for its æthereal, refined substance, they say, is, by *St. Paul*, termed a *spiritual body*, 1 Cor. xv. 14. And being here pressed with the very literal signification of the word *resurrection*; which implies a repeated existence of the same thing, they will have it here used only by a kind of *metaphor*, viz. That, because in death, a man seems to the perception and view of *sense* utterly to perish, and cease to be, therefore his *restitution* seems to have a sort of *resurrection*. And as for those *Greek* words 'Αναστῆναι and 'Εγείρειν, they endeavour to shew, by other like places of scripture, that they signify no more than the bare suscitation, raising or giving being to a thing, without its having fallen or perished before. As for instance, in *Matth.* xxii. 24. 'Αναστήσει τὸ σπέρμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ, *he shall raise up seed to his brother*. And in *Rom.* ix. 17. God says of *Pharaoh*, διὰ τῆτο ἐξήγειρά σε *for this cause*

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cause have I raised thee up. Whereas, neither of these can be supposed to have perished before that *raising*. From whence, and some other such like places, they conclude, that these words applied to the present case, import at most the bare restoration of the man; and that not necessarily by restoring his soul to its old body, but by joining it to a new; accounted indeed the same to all real intents and purposes of use, though not by formal *identity*; they still affirming, nevertheless, the man thus *raised*, and with his new body, to be the same person; forasmuch, (as they say) it is the *soul* or *spirit* which makes the man, and is the proper principle which gives the individuation. This was their opinion.

And thus I have done with the first of the three propositions drawn from the words, *viz. The exceeding great difficulty of mens believing a resurrection.* And that, both by proving that actually it is so, from the most authentick examples alledgeable in the case, and by assigning withal the reasons and causes why it comes to be so: I proceed now to the II. proposition, *viz.* To shew, that notwithstanding this difficulty, there is yet sufficient reason, and solid ground for the belief of it.

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And this I shall endeavour to do, both by answering the foregoing objections brought against the resurrection; and withal, offering something, by way of argument, for the positive proof of it.

I. Now for the first of these. I shew, that the resurrection was argued against upon two distinct heads, *viz.* The *improbabilities* attending it, and the *impossibilities* charged upon it. And

(1.) Briefly, as to the objection from the *improbabilities* said to attend it, and to keep men off from the belief of it, besides that the said objection runs in a very loose and popular, rather than in a close and argumentative way, and looks more like *harangue* than *reasoning*, (though yet the best that the thing will bear) we are to observe yet farther, that not every strange and unusual event ought always, and under all circumstances, to be accounted *improbable*. For where a sufficient cause of any thing or event may be assigned, though above, and beyond the common course of natural causes, I cannot reckon that event or thing properly and strictly *improbable*. Forasmuch, as it is no ways *improbable*, that the supreme agent and governor of things should, for some great end or purpose, sometimes step out of the ordinary road of his providence, (as

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undoubtedly he often does) and of which there are several instances upon record, both in sacred and prophane story, relating what strange things have happened in the world, which could not rationally be ascribed to any other, but the super-natural workings of a divine power. Nevertheless, admitting, but not granting the fore-alledged *improbabilities* of a resurrection; yet this does not at all affect the point now in dispute before us, which turns not properly upon the probability, but the possibility of the thing here discoursed of. And where there is a possibility on the one side, answered by an omnipotence on the other, there can be no ground to question an effect commensurate to both. For a resurrection being allowed *possible*, though never so *improbable*, still it is in the number of those things which an infinite power can do; and upon this account we find, that there is a much higher pitch of infidelity, which stops not here, but goes so far on, as to deny the very possibility of it to: And this brings me to the examination of the

(2.) Objection produced against this article of the resurrection, from the utter impossibility thereof, (as the objectors pretend) and that impossibility (as we have shewn) founded upon the continual transmutation of one body into another. This, I say, was the argument; and

it seems to me to press the hardest upon the resurrection of the same numerical body, and to be the most difficult to be solved and answered, of any other whatsoever. For as for those, commonly drawn from the seeming impossibility of bringing together such an innumerable multitude of minute particles, as from a body once dissolved must needs be scattered all the world over into the several elements of fire, air, water, and earth, and re-uniting them all together at the last day : I cannot, I say, find any thing in all this either hard or puzzling, and much less contrary to natural reason to believe, if we do but acknowledge an *omniscience* in the agent, who is to do this great thing, joined with an *omnipotence* in the same. For, by the first of these two perfections, he cannot but know where all, and every one of the said particles of the body are lodged and disposed of ; and by the latter, he must be no less able to bring them from all parts and places of the universe, though never so vastly distant from one another, and join them again together in the restitution of the said body. Nothing being difficult, either for *Omniscience* to know, or for *Omnipotence* to do ; but when the thing to be done is, in the nature of it, impossible ; as the fore-alledged argument would infer the resurrection to be.

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To which therefore I answer, that the proposition or assertion, upon which the said argument is grounded, is neither *evident* nor *certain*; and that we have no assurance, that the transmutation of an human body, into other animated bodies after its dissolution, is total, and extends to all the parts thereof; but that there may be a considerable portion of matter in every man's body, (for of such only we now dispute) which never passes by *transmutation* into any other animated body, but sinks into, and rests in the common mass of matter, contained in the four elements, (according to the respective nature of each particular element wherein it is lodged) and there continues unchanged, by any new animation, till the last day. But what these particular parts are, which admit of no such farther change, and what quantity of corporeal substance, or matter they make or amount to, I suppose, is known only to God himself, the great *disposer* and governor, as well as *maker* and governor of the world.

And whereas it is said in the objection, that such a continual transmutation, as is here supposed, is evident from a general, constant, uncontestable experience; I deny, that the just measures, bounds, and compass of this transmutation can be exactly known by, or evident
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to common experience; forasmuch as it falls not under the cognizance of the outward senses; and yet it is only that, and the repeated observations made thereby, which experience is, or can be founded upon. For who can assure himself, or any one else, upon his own personal sight, hearing, or the report of any other of his senses, that the whole matter of a dissolved body passes successively into other living bodies? (though a great portion of it may, and without question does;) and if, on the other side, he cannot, upon his own personal observation, give a full and exact account of this, can he pretend to tell how, and where the providence of God has disposed of the remaining part of the said dissolved body, which has not undergone any such change? This, I say, is not to be known by us, either by any observation of sense, or discourse of reason founded thereupon, and I know of no revelation to adjust the matter. So that, although it should be supposed true, (which we do by no means grant to be so) that in the dissolution of every human body, the whole mass, and every part of the said body, underwent such an entire transmutation, as we have been speaking of; yet, since this cannot certainly be known, it cannot come into argumentation, as a proof of that which it is alledged for; unless we would
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prove an *ignotum per æquè ignotum*; which being grossly illogical, and a mere *petitio principii*, can conclude nothing, nor at all affect the subject in dispute, one way or other: Forasmuch, as in every demonstration of the highest sort, the principles thereof ought to be *evident*, as well as *certain*.

The sum of all therefore is this; That every human body, upon its dissolution, sinks by degrees into the elementary mass of matter; whereof a great part passes by several animations into other bodies; and a great part likewise remains in the same elementary mass, without undergoing any farther change. To which reserved portion, at the last day, the soul as the prime, individuating principle, and the said reserved portion of matter, as an essential and radical part of the individuation, together with a sufficient supply of more matter (if requisite) from the general mass, shall, by the Almighty power of God joining all those together, make up and restore the same individual person: And this cuts off all necessity of holding, that what was once an integral part of one body, should, at the same time, become an integral part of another, which, 'tis confessed, for the reason before given, would make the restitution of the same numerical portion of matter to both bodies, utterly impossible.

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But if it be here replied, that our assertion of a *reserved portion of matter* never passing into other animated bodies by any farther transmutation, (albeit a considerable portion of the same dissolved body be allowed so to do) is a thing merely *gratis dictum* ; and that we have not yet positively proved the same : My answer is, that in the present case, there is no necessity of proving, that it is actually so ; but it is sufficient to our purpose, that the contrary cannot be proved, and that nothing hinders, but that *it may be so* ; the thing being in itself *possible* : And if that be granted, then the argument, founded upon the supposed impossibility of it, comes to nothing. Forasmuch as being possible, it falls within the *compass* of *God's omnipotence*, which is the great attribute to be employed in this case. And this effectually overthrows the whole force of the objection.

But if it be farther argued, that the great addition of matter to be made at the last day out of the common mass, to those *remainders of matter*, which (having belonged to the same man's body formerly) are then to be completed into a perfect body again, seems inconsistent with the numerical identity of the body which was before, and that which shall be afterwards at the resurrection : I answer, that this is no more

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more inconsistent with the numerical identity thereof, than the addition of so great a quantity of new matter, as comes to be made to a man's body, by a continual augmentation of all the parts of it, from his birth to his full stature, makes his body numerically another at his grown age, from that which the same person had while he was yet an infant. In both which ages, nevertheless, the body is still reckoned but one and the same in *number*, though in disparity of bulk and substance, twenty to one greater in the latter, than in the former. Accordingly, suppose we farther, that only so much matter as has still continued in our bodies, from our coming into the world, to our going out of it, shall be re-united to our soul at the resurrection, even that may, and will be sufficient to constitute our *glorified body* in a real, numerical identity with that *body*, which the soul was in before, so as, upon all accounts, to be still the same body though in those so very different states and conditions.

And therefore, the opinion of the *Socinians*, viz. That the soul, at the resurrection, shall be clothed with another and quite different body, from what it had in this life, (whether of *Æther*, or some such like sublimated matter) moved thereto by the forementioned objections,
and

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and the like, ought not to be admitted : It being contrary to reason, and all sound philosophy, that the soul successively united to two entirely distinct bodies, should make but one and the same numerical person : Since though the soul be indeed the prime and chief principle of the individuation of the person, yet it is not the sole and adequate principle thereof ; but the soul, joined with the body, makes the adequate, individuating principle of the person. Nor will any true philosophy allow, that the body was ever intended for the mere garment of the soul, but for an essential, constituent part of the man, as really as the soul itself : And the difference of an essential half in any composition, will be sure to make an essential difference in the whole compound. Nor is this *Socinian* assertion more contrary to the principles of philosophy, than to the express words of scripture ; which are not more positive in affirming a resurrection, than in declaring a resurrection of the same numerical person. And whereas, they say, that they grant, that the same numerical person shall rise again, though not the same body, (the soul as they contend, still individuating any body which it shall be cloathed with) we have already shewn, on the contrary, that the person cannot be numerically the same, when the body is not so too ;
since

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since the soul is not the sole principle of personal individuation, though the chief; besides that it seems very odd, and no ways agreeable to the common sentiments of reason, to say, that any thing rises again, which had never perished nor fallen before, as it is certain that the body, which these men suppose shall be united to the soul at the last day, never did. But to elude the force of this argument, the *Socinians* pretend, that the words, whereby we would infer a resurrection of the same body, to wit, ἀναστῆναι, ἐγείρειν, and ἐγείρεσθαι, &c. infer no such thing in the several texts from whence they are alledged; but only import a bare suscitation, or raising up of a thing, without any necessity of supposing it to have perished before, as being often applied to things entirely produced *de novo*. But the answer to this is not difficult, *viz.* That the point now before us is not wholly determinable from the bare grammatical use of these words; (according to which we deny not, but that they sometimes import a mere suscitation or production of a thing, without supposing any precedent destruction of the same;) but the sense of these words must be sometimes also determined, by the particular state and circumstance of the objects, to which they are applied; as when they are applied to, and used about things bereaved of their former existence;

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existence ; (as persons dead, and departed this life, manifestly are) and in such a case, whenever the words ἀναστῆναι, ἐγείρειν, and ἐγείρεσθαι come to be so applied, I affirm, that they can, with no tolerable accord to common sense and reason, be allowed to signify any thing else, but the *repetition* or *restitution* of lost-existence, or (in other words) the re-fuscitation of that which had perished before.

And thus much in answer to the objection brought to prove the impossibility of a resurrection of the same numerical body founded upon the continual transmutation of one body into another. The sum of all amounting to this, *viz.* That if the transmutation of human bodies after death, into other animate bodies successively, be total, the objection, founded upon such a transmutation, is not easy to be avoided ; and if, on the other side, it be not total, I cannot see how it proves, that the restitution of the same numerical body carries in it any contradiction, nor consequently any impossibility at all. For the point now before us depending chiefly upon the due stating of the object of an infinite power ; if the thing in dispute be but possible, it is sufficient to overthrow any argument that would pretend to prove, that an Omnipotence cannot effect it. Which consideration having been thus offered by us, for
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the clearing of the fore-cited objection, we shall now proceed in the

2. Place, to produce something (as we promised) by way of positive proof for the evincing of a resurrection, notwithstanding all the difficulties and repugnancies which seem to attend it. And here, since this is a point of religion, knowable only by revelation, it cannot be positively proved, or made out to us any other way, than by revelation, that is to say, by what God has declared in his written word concerning it. For natural reason and philosophy will afford us but little assistance in a case so extremely above both. Accordingly, since revelation is our only competent guide in this matter, the natural method, I conceive, for us to proceed by in our discourses thereupon, must be this, *viz.* That whereas the objection is, that the resurrection of the same numerical body implies in it a contradiction, and therefore cannot possibly be, even by the divine power itself; the proper answer to this ought to be by an inversion of the same terms after this manner, *viz.* That God has declared, that he will, and therefore can raise the same numerical body at the last day. So that the sum of the whole matter turns upon this point; to wit, whether that which we judge *to be*, or not to be a contradiction, ought to measure the extent

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of the divine power ; or, on the other side, *the divine power* to determine what is, or is not to be accounted by us a *contradiction*. And the difficulty on either side seems not inconsiderable. For if we take the first of these methods, this inconveniency will attend it ; that the measure we make use of, is always short of the thing we apply it to ; as a finite must needs be short of an infinite : And sometimes also false, and thereby not only short of it, but moreover disagreeable to it ; it being very possible, (because indeed very frequent) that the mind of man, even with its utmost sagacity, may be mistaken, and judge that to imply a contradiction, which really does not so. But, on the other hand, if we make the divine power the measure, whereby we ought to judge what is, or what is not a contradiction, we make that a measure which we do not thoroughly understand or comprehend ; and that is contrary to the very nature and notion of a measure ; forasmuch as that by which we would understand another thing, ought to be first understood itself. But how shall we be able to understand the extent of an infinite power, so as to know certainly how far it can go, and where it must stop, and can go no farther ? As if we should argue thus : This or that implies in it no contradiction, because God, by

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his divine power, can effect it ; I think the inference very good : But for all that, it may be reply'd, how do you know what an infinite or divine power can or cannot do ? Certain it is, that it cannot destroy itself, or put an end to its own being ; and possibly there may be some other things (unknown to us) which are likewise under an incapacity of being done by it. And how then shall we govern our speculations in this arduous and perplexing point ? For my own part, I should think it not only the safest, but in all respects the most rational way, in any doubtful case, where the power of Almighty God is concerned, to ascribe as much to him, as his divine nature and attributes suffer us to do. That is to say, that we rather prescribe to our reason from his power, than to his power from any rule or maxim taken up by our reason. And since there is a necessity of some rule or other to proceed by, in forming a judgment of God's power, no less than of his other perfections ; let God's *word* or revelation, (in the name of all that pretends to be *sensible* or *rational*) founded upon his infallible knowledge of whatsoever he says or reveals, (and confirmed by his essential *veracity* inseparably attending it) be *that great rule* for us to judge by : For a better (I am sure) can never be assigned, nor a safer rely'd upon. And accordingly, when

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our Saviour was to answer the *Sadducees*, disputing upon this very subject, the *resurrection*; he argues not from any topick of common reason, or natural philosophy, but wholly from the *power of God*, as declared by the *word of God*. *Do ye not therefore err*, (says he) *Mark xii. 24. because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?* or, in other words, *the power of God, as declared in scripture?* Our Saviour went no farther with them, as knowing this to have been home to the point, and sufficient for their conviction. And upon the same account, those remarkable passages in the Evangelists cannot but be of mighty weight in the present case: As that particularly in *Mat. xix. 26.* and in *Mark x. 27.* In both which it is plainly and positively affirmed, *that with God all things are possible*; and yet more particularly in *Luke xviii. 27.* where Christ, speaking of some *things accounted with men impossible*, tells us, *that the things impossible with men, were possible with God*. The antithesis, we see here, is clear and full enough; and yet even with men nothing uses to be accounted impossible, but what is judged by them one way or other to imply in it a contradiction; and if so, it is evident, that the divine power may extend to some things, which, in the judgments of men, pass for contradictions; and consequently, that what according to their judgment

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judgments implies in it a contradiction, cannot be always a just measure of what is impossible for God to do. Nevertheless, in order to the better understanding of this matter, I conceive it may not be amiss to distinguish here of two sorts of contradictions.

(1.) Such as appear immediately and self-evidently so, from the very terms of the proposition, wherein they are expressed. The predicate implying in it a direct *negation* of the *subject*, and the subject mutually of the *predicate*; so that, upon the bare understanding of the signification of the terms or parts of the proposition, we cannot but apprehend and see the contradiction couched under them, and the utter inconsistency of the *idea* of one, with the *idea* of the other: As if, for instance, we should say, that light is darkness, or that darkness is light; or that a piece of bread of *about an inch in breadth*, and of *an inch in length*, is a man's body of about a yard and an half in *length*, and of a proportionable size in *breadth*; each of these propositions or assertions would import a direct and evident negation of the other, upon the very first sight or hearing, without any farther examination of them at all. But then,

(2.) There is another sort of *contradictions*; which may not improperly be termed *consequen-*
tial. That is to say, such as shew themselves,

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not by the immediate *self-evidence of the terms*, but by consequences and deductions drawn from some known principle by human ratiocination or discourse, and the judgment which men use to pass upon things in the strength and light thereof. In all which, since men may be deceived, (nothing being more incident to common humanity than mistake) such contradictions cannot be so far rely'd upon, as to be taken for a perfect and sure measure of what the divine power can, or cannot do. As for instance, if we should say, 'that for a body
' having been once destroyed, and transmuted
' into other human bodies, or some parts thereof
' successively to be restored again with all
' the parts of it complete, *and numerically the*
' *same*, is a *contradiction*;' it is certain, however, that the contradiction here charged, does not manifestly appear *such* from any *evidence of the terms*, but is only gathered by such consequences and inferences, as men form to themselves in their discourses upon this subject; and therefore, though possibly a truth, yet can be no clear *proof*, that it is impossible for an infinite power to do that, which is here supposed, and said to be a contradiction. But, on the other side, touching the first sort of contradictions mentioned by us, and shewing themselves by the immediate *self-evidence of the terms*;
these,

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these, no doubt, ought to be looked upon by us out of the sphere or compass of Omnipotence itself to effect. Or otherwise, that old, and universally received rule, viz. *That the divine power extends to the doing of every thing, not implying in it a contradiction*, must be exploded, and laid aside by us, as utterly useless and fallacious.

But now with reference to the foregoing distinction of *prime and consequential contradictions*; if it should be here asked, whether a contradiction of the latter sort be not as really, and as much a contradiction, as one of the former: I grant, that it is; (there being no *magis* and *minus* in contradictions) but nevertheless, not so manifestly, nor so evidently such, nor consequently of so much force in *argumentation*, nor equally capable of having a conclusion, or inference drawn from it, as the other is. For we are to observe, that in the case now before us, a contradiction is not so much considered for what it is barely in itself, as for its being a *medium* to prove something else by it; and for that reason, we allow not the same conclusive force (though the same *reality*, could it be proved) to a *consequential* contradiction, which we allow to a *prime* and *self-evident* one, and such as shews itself to the very first view, in and by the *bare terms*

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of the proposition, wherein it is contained,

Upon the whole matter therefore, if by true and sound reasoning I stand assured, that God has affirmed or declared a thing, all objections against the same, though never so strong, (even *reason* itself, upon the strictest principles of it, being judge) must of necessity fall to the ground. Forasmuch as *reason* itself cannot but acknowledge that men of the best wit, learning, and judgment, may sometimes take that for a contradiction, which really is not so; but still, on the other side, must own it utterly impossible for a being infinitely perfect, holy, and true, either to *deceive*, or be *deceived* in any thing affirmed or attested by it. And moreover, to carry this point yet something farther: If a proposition be once settled upon a solid bottom, and sufficiently proved, it will and must continue to be so, notwithstanding any after-arguments, or objections brought against it, whether we can answer and clear off the said objections, or no: I say, it lessens not our obligation to believe such a proposition one jot. And if the whole body of Christians, throughout all places and ages, should with one voice declare, that they could not solve the foregoing objection urged against the resurrection, and taken from the continual transmutation of bodies into one another, or
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any other such-like arguments, it would not abate one degree of duty lying upon them, to acknowledge and embrace the said article, as an indispensable part of their Christian faith; nor would they be at all the worse Christians, for not being able to give a philosophical account or solution thereof; so long as, with a *non obstante* to all such difficulties, they stedfastly adhered to, and acquiesced in the article itself. For, so far as I can see, this whole controversy depends upon, and ought to be determined by the scriptures, as wholly turning upon these two points, *viz.* 1st. Whether a future general resurrection be affirmed and revealed in the scriptures, or no? And 2^{dly}, Whether the said scriptures be the word of God? and if the matter stands thus, I am sure, that none can justly pretend to the name of a Christian, who in the least doubts of the affirmative in either of these two points. And consequently, if this article stands thus proved, all arguments formed against it, upon the stock of reason or philosophy, come too late to shake it; for they find the thing already fixed and proved; and being so, it cannot, by after-allegations, be disproved. Since it being also a proposition wholly founded upon revelation, and the authority of the revelation upon the authority of the revealer, all arguments from
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any thing else are wholly foreign to the subject in dispute; and accordingly, ought by no means to be admitted, either as necessary proofs of it, or so much as competent objections against it. For whatsoever is contrary to the word or affirmation of a being infinitely knowing, and essentially infallible, let it carry with it never so much shew of truth; yet it certainly is, and can be nothing else but fallacy and imposture. And upon this one ground I firmly do, and ought to believe a general resurrection, though ten thousand arguments from the principles of natural philosophy could be opposed to it. But may it not then, you will say, upon the same terms, be here argued, that *Jesus Christ* (who is God blessed for ever) having expressly said of the bread in the holy sacrament, *This is my body*, we ought to believe the said piece of bread to be really and substantially his body, how much soever we may apprehend it to contradict the principles of sense, reason, and philosophy? To this I answer; That the words here alledged, as pronounced by our Saviour, are confessedly in the holy scripture. But that every thing affirmed by God in scripture, is there affirmed and intended by him, *literally, properly, and not figuratively*; this I utterly deny. And since it is agreed to by all, (and even by those, whom
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in this matter, we contend with) that many expressions in scripture cannot be understood but by a *figure*; and since, moreover, I grant and assert, that every thing affirmed by God in holy scripture ought to be believed in that sense only, in which it is so affirmed; I will venture to allow the persons, who are for the *literal sense* of those particular words against the *figurative*, till dooms-day, to prove that the *literal sense* only ought to take place here, and the *figurative* to be exploded, and set aside; and if they can but prove this, I shall not fail (as I said before) to believe and assent to the thing so proved, whatsoever that, which the world calls common reason and philosophy, shall, or can suggest, and offer to the contrary.

And this, I hope, may suffice to have been spoken upon the second proposition assigned for the prosecution of this subject, namely, *That notwithstanding all the difficulties and objections alledged against the article of a general resurrection, there is yet sufficient reason, and solid ground for the belief of it.* From whence we should now proceed to treat of the third and last proposition :

III. ‘ *That a sufficiency of reason being thus given for the belief of the said article, all the difficulties, and seeming repugnancies to reason,*
‘ *which*

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‘ which it is charged with, do exceedingly enhance the worth, value, and excellency of that belief.’

But this, as I reckon, having been, in effect, done by us already; and the whole matter set in a full view, partly by clearing off the objections, pretended to be brought against it, from natural reason, in the two foregoing propositions; and partly by establishing the proof thereof upon the sure basis of those three great attributes of God, his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his essential veracity, all of them employed to warrant and engage our assent to it: We shall now at length come to consider the same more particularly in some of the consequences deducible from it. Such as are these two that follow:

1. We collect from hence the utter insufficiency of bare natural religion, to answer the proper ends and purposes which God intended religion for. And,

2. We infer from hence also, the diabolical impiety of the *Socinian opinions*; and particularly of those relating to the *resurrection*. And here,

1. For the first of these, the *insufficiency* of natural religion, to answer the proper ends which religion was designed for. This is most certain, that *natural religion* exceeds not the compass of *natural reason*; it neither looks higher,

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higher, nor reaches farther, but both of them are commensurate to one another; and it is every whit as certain, that the soul of man being the proper seat and subject of religion, must needs be allowed to be immortal; and being withal both endued with, and acted by the affections of *hope* and *fear*, that it must be supply'd with objects proper and adequate to both, which yet nothing under an eternal happiness with respect to the one, and an eternal misery with reference to the other, together with a general resurrection from the dead, to render men capable of either, can possibly be. So that it is manifest from the very nature and essentials of religion, supposing it perfect, that the particulars now alledged by us, necessarily do, and must come up to the *utmost* of what they stand alledged for. But then, on the other hand, can mere natural reason of itself, by full evidence and strength of argument, convince us of any of the aforesaid particulars? As for instance, can it demonstrate, that the soul is *immortal*? Or can it certainly prove, that there is a future and eternal state of happiness, or of misery in another life? And that, in order to it, there shall be a resurrection of their mortal bodies after an utter dissolution of them into dust and ashes? No, there is nothing in bare reason, that can so much as pretend to

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evinced demonstratively any of these doctrines or assertions. And what then can natural religion do or say in the case? For where the former is at a stand, the latter can go no farther; so that there is an absolute necessity, if we would have any more certain knowledge of these matters, to fetch it from *revelation*. Forasmuch as the great Apostle himself assures us, in 1 Cor. ii. 9. *That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what things God has prepared for those that love him*; nor consequently, (by a parity of reason) what miseries he has prepared for those that hate him. And if both of them are a perfect non-plus, and baffle to all human understanding; is it possible for natural reason to comprehend *what the heart of man cannot conceive*? Nothing certainly can be a grosser contradiction, and that in the very terms of it, than such an assertion. But some perhaps may here say, that though natural reason, by its own strength and light, cannot give us a clear and particular account, *what these things are*; yet it may however be able to discover to us, *that really there are such things*. But in answer to this also, the same Apostle tells us, in 2 Tim. i. 10. *That it was our Saviour Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*: That is to say,
cleared

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cleared off all doubts about the immortal state and being of the soul, the everlasting felicities of the righteous, and the *never-dying worm*, and torments of the wicked in another world. Touching all which, I affirm, that nothing but divine *revelation* could give any solid satisfaction to the minds of men, either as to the *quid sit*, or the *quod sit* of these things; that is to say, either by declaring the nature of them, *what they are*; or by proving the existence and being of them, *that they are*; besides that the very expression of *bringing a thing to light*, must needs import its being hidden or undiscovered (at least to any considerable purpose) before. But some possibly may here farther object, that the Heathens could not but, long before the times of our Saviour, have had a competent knowledge of these matters. For did they not, by what they discoursed of the *Elysian* fields, intend thereby to express the future blessedness of pious and virtuous persons? And by what they taught of *Styx*, *Acheron*, and *Cocytus*, and the torments of *Prometheus*, *Ixion*, and other famous criminals, design likewise to set forth to us the future miseries of the wicked and flagitious? No doubt, they meant so: but still all this was built upon such weak and fabulous grounds, that the wiser sort of them did but despise and laugh at all these

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these things. So that *Juvenal* speaking of these matters, tells us in plain terms, *vix pueri credunt*, that children scarce believed them; though surely, if any thing could dispose the mind of men to an extravagant credulity, one would think, that the age and state of *childhood* should. And then, as for the immortality of the soul, whatsoever *Plato* and other Philosophers might argue in behalf thereof, yet I am abundantly satisfied, that neither *Plato*, nor all of them together, have been able to argue more close and home to this subject, than those wits, who have lived in the ages after them, have done. And yet, upon the result of all, I do not find, that any thing hitherto has been so clearly and irrefragably proved for the immortality of it; but that the most that can be done upon this argument, is, that the soul cannot be proved by any principle of natural reason to be mortal. And that (though it does not prove so much as it should do) is yet, I think, no inconsiderable point or step gained: But after all, admitting the proof hereof to be as full and convincing as we could wish, then what can natural reason say to a general resurrection from the dead, that main article which we are now insisting upon? Why, truly nothing at all: And if this be the utmost, which is to be had from natural reason

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reason upon this point, I am sure, there is no more to be had from natural religion; which (to make the very best and most of it) is nothing but *reason, not assisted by revelation.*

But,

2. *The other thing*, which we shall infer from the foregoing particulars, is, the horrible impiety of the *Socinian opinions*; and particularly of those relating to the *resurrection*, and the state of mens souls after death. The *Socinians*, who have done their utmost to overthrow the *credenda* of Christianity, are not for stopping there, but for giving as great a blow to the *agenda* of it too, by subverting (if possible) those principles which are to support the practice of it. Amongst which, I reckon one of the chief to be, the belief of those eternal torments awarded by God to persons dying in a state of sin and impenitence, one of the most powerful checks to sin, doubtless, of any that religion affords: Forasmuch as where there is one withheld from sin, by the hopes of those eternal joys promised in the scripture; I dare affirm, that there are an hundred at least (if not more) kept from it by the fears of eternal torments. And the reason of this is, because those things by which the *joys of heaven* are represented to us, do by no means make so quick and lively an impression upon mens

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minds, as those, by which the *torments of hell*, as they are described to us, are found to do. I am far, I confess, from affirming, that this ought to be so; but as the state of mankind now generally is, there are but too many, and too manifest proofs, that actually it is so. And I do not in the least question, but that there are millions, who would readily part with all their hopes of the *future felicities*, which the scripture promises them, upon condition, that they might be secured from the *eternal torments* which it threatens*. And therefore, what a mighty

* They deny the torments of hell, and give this reason for it. *Quod absurdum sit Deum irasci in æternum, & peccata creaturarum finita pœnis infinitis mulctare, præsertim cum nulla hinc ipsius gloria illustretur.* Compendiolum doctrinæ ecclesiarum in Poloniâ. Likewise *Ernestus Sonnerus*, a noted Socinian, has wrote a just treatise, with this title prefix'd to it, *Demonstratio theologica & philosophica, quod æterna impiorum supplicia non arguant Dei justitiam, sed injustitiam.* And if they be unjust, we may be sure (as *Dr. Tillotson* in his sermon on *Matth. xxv. 46.* learnedly observes) that there shall be no such thing. And to shew farther, how industrious these factors for the devil are, to rid mens minds of the grand restraint of sin, the belief of eternal torments, he sets down at the end of his demonstration (as he calls it) several places of scripture, where the words [*eternal*] and [*for ever*] signify not an infinite or everlasting, but only a finite, though indefinite duration. Likewise *Diodorus Camphuyssen*, one of the same tribe, with a frontless impudence, in a certain epistle of his, requires such as should read it, *Negare & ridere damnatorum pœnas, & cruciatus æternos*; that is, not only to deny, but also to laugh at the eternal torments, and punishments of the damned. And to make yet surer work, (if possible) *Socinus* denies the soul even a capacity of being tormented after a man's death. *Tantum id mihi videtur statui posse, post hanc vitam, animam, sive animum hominis non ita per se subsistere, ut præmia ulla pœnasve sentiat, vel etiam ista sentiendi sit capax, quæ mea firma opinio,*

&c.

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mighty encouragement must the denial of *eternal punishments* needs be to all sorts of wickedness in the lives of men? And what shall be able to restrain the progress and rage of it, in the course of the world, when sinners shall be told, that after all the villanies committed by them here, nothing is to be expected or feared by them, when they have quitted this life but a total annihilation or extinction of their persons, together with an endless continuance under the said estate? And is not this, think we, a sort of *eternal punishment* according to the sinner's own heart's desire? For since it so utterly bereaves him of all sense, that he can *feel* nothing hereafter, let him alone to *fear* as little here. And as for the *resurrection from the dead*, the same men generally deny, *that the wicked shall have any at all*; it being (as they affirm) intended by God for a peculiar favour and privilege to the godly, who *alone are to be*

&c. Socinus in *quintâ epistolâ ad Volkeliûm*. And elsewhere, *Homo, siue anima humana nihil cum immortalitate habet commune*. In short, I am so far from accounting the authors or owners of such horrid assertions to be really Christians, that I account them really the worst of men, if prophaneness, blasphemy and the letting loose all sorts of wickedness upon the world can make them so. For according to these grand agents and apostles of Satan, wicked men, no less than the very brutes themselves, (whose *spirits also they affirm to return to God*, as well as those of the other) *being once dead, shall rise no more*. And if they can but persuade men, *That they shall die like beasts*, there is no question to be made, but that most of them will be quickly brought *to live like beasts too*.

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the sons of the resurrection. But then, if these men find themselves pinched by such scriptures, as that of the xxvth of St. *Matthew*, and this of my text, so expressly declaring a *resurrection*, both of *the just and the unjust*; in this case, some of them have another assertion to fly to; namely, that the wicked shall indeed be raised again at the last day; but immediately after such a resuscitation, shall be annihilated and destroyed for ever: An assertion so intolerably absurd, and so manifestly a scoff upon religion, that none but an *Atheist* or *Socinian* (another word for the same thing) could have been so prophane, as even to think of it, or so impudent, as to own or declare it. In fine, such is the diabolical impiety, and the mischievous influence of the foregoing opinions upon the practices of mankind, and consequently upon the peace and welfare of societies and governments, (all depending upon the said practices) that all sober and pious minds do even groan under the very thoughts of such foul invasions upon religion; and cannot but wonder, even to amazement, that the maintainers of such tenets were not long since delivered over into the hands of civil justice, to receive condign punishment by the sentence of the judge; as likewise, that those who *deny the divinity and satisfaction of our Saviour*, explode origi-
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nal sin, and revive several of the old condemn-
ed blasphemies, have not long before this been
brought under the censures of the church *in*
convocation. But if, on the contrary, the shel-
tering of some such rotten church-men, as well
as several others, from the dint of ecclesiastical
authority, was one great cause of that so long
and unaccountable omission of those sacred and
most useful assemblies, for many years together,
since the restauration, (as many wise and good
men shrewdly suspect it was) is it not just with
God, and may it not (for ought we know)
actually provoke him to deprive us even of the
Christian religion itself? For assuredly, that
lewd, scandalous, and ungrateful usage, which
it has (of late years especially) found from some
of the highest pretenders to it amongst us, has
not only *deserv'd*, but upon too great grounds
of reason, seems also to prognosticate and fore-
bode, and even cry out for no less a judgment
upon the nation. But howsoever God (*whose*
ways are unsearchable) shall think fit to dispose
of, and deal with us, let us not vainly flatter
ourselves; but as we have been hitherto proving
the *certainty* of a general resurrection, so let
us still remember, that the day of *the resurrec-*
tion will be as certainly a day of *retribution*
too. A day, in which the *proudest and most*
exalted hypocrite shall be brought low enough,

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and even the *lowest hypocrites* much lower than they desire to be. A day, in which the meanest and most abject (if sincere) member of our excellent (how much soever struck at and maligned) church, shall be raised to a most happy and *glorious condition*. Though, whether or no the church itself (God bless it) be, in the mean time, in so *flourishing an estate*, (as some would persuade us it is) I shall not, I must not presume to determine.

Now to God, the great judge and rewarder of men, according to the vileness of their principles, as well as the wickedness of their practices, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

THE
DOCTRINE

Of the

Blessed Trinity asserted,

And proved not contrary to

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SERMON VII.

The Doctrine of the Blessed
Trinity asserted, and proved
not contrary to Reason.

COL. ii. 2. latter part.

—*To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.*

Εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Πατρὸς, καὶ
τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

IN the handling and asserting of the doctrine of the Trinity, I do not remember any place so often urged, and so much insisted upon by divines, as that in 1 Job. v. 7. *There are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three*

three are one : A text fully containing in it the doctrine of three distinct divine persons, in one and the same blessed and eternal Godhead ; a doctrine unanimously received by the Catholick Christian church ; and warranted by the testimony of the most ancient, genuine, and unexceptionable records or copies of the new testament, as well as of the most noted of the fathers concerning it ; and that not only as of a single article, but rather as the sum total of our Christian *faith*, and not so much a part or member, as a full but short *compendium* of our religion. And yet under these high advantages of credibility, we see what opposition it met with, both from ancients and moderns ; of the first sort of which, we have *Arius* with his infamous crew leading the van, by questioning the text itself, as if not originally extant in some two or three ancient copies of this epistle ; and, of the latter sort, are those innumerable sects and sectaries sprung up since ; some of them openly denying, and some of them (whose learning one would have thought might have been better employed) slyly undermining this grand fundamental ; and while they seemingly acknowledge the truth, as it lies in the bare words of the *text*, treacherously giving it up in the *explication*.

As

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As for the *Socinians*, who hold with the *Arians*, so far as they oppose us, though not in all which the *Arians* assert themselves, they have a double refuge. And first with them *pretending* the doubtfulness of the text, they would farther evade it by a new interpretation of *its sense*, affirming, that this expression [*these three are one*] does not of necessity import an *unity of nature*, but *only of consent* : The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, being therefore said to *be one*, because they jointly and indivisibly carry on one and the same design ; all of them jointly concurring in the great work of man's salvation.

Thus say they ; but if this were indeed so, and if no more than *matter of consent* were here intended, where then (in God's name) would be the *mystery*, which the universal Christian church have all along acknowledged to be contained in these words ? For that the *Father*, the *Word*, and the holy *Spirit*, should thus jointly concur in, and carry on the grand business of saving mankind, is a doctrine expressing in it nothing mysterious, unaccountable, or surpassing man's understanding at all.

But farther, if *unity of consent* only were here intended, why in all reason was it expressed by *ἐν εἰσι*, that is, they are one *thing*, *being* or *nature*, and not rather by *εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰσι*,

they agree in one? as in the very next verse to this, such an *unity of concurrence* in the *spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, is expressed by the same words *εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσι*, manifestly importing no identity, or unity of *nature*, or *being*, but only of *agreement* in some certain respect or other; and doubtless, in so very near a neighbourhood and conjunction of words had the sense been perfectly the same, there can be no imaginable reason given, why the Apostle should in the very same case thus have varied the expression.

But, for yet a farther assertion of the great truth now insisted upon, this text out of the epistle to the *Colossians* will as effectually evince the same, as the place before-mentioned; though perhaps not quite so plainly, nor wholly in the same way; that is to say, it will do it by *solid inference and just consequence from the words*, though not expressly in the very words themselves. And accordingly we may consider those words, *Εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς μυστηρίας τῆς Θεᾶς, καὶ Πατρὸς, καὶ τῆς Χριστοῦ*, two different ways, *viz.*

1. As the term *τῆς Θεᾶς* may be taken *personally*, as in scripture sometimes it is, and then it will here signify the *Holy Ghost*, the *third person* of the blessed Trinity, though not indeed mentioned in this place in the *same order* in which the three persons commonly use to be;
but

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but the order, I conceive, may sometimes be less observed, without any change in, or detriment to the *article itself*. And so this text out of the epistle to the *Colossians* will point out to us the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, as well as that fore-alledged *place*, out of *St. John*, did. But,

2. If the word τῷ Θεῷ be here taken *essentially*, and for the *divine nature* only; then the particle ἡ will import here properly a distribution of τῷ Θεῷ (signifying the *divine nature*) as a term common to those two, τῷ Πατρὶς ἡ τῷ Χριστῷ, as to two particular *persons*, distinguish'd by their respective properties. And so taken, it must be confessed, that the term τῷ Θεῷ here will not signify the *person of the Holy Ghost*. But granting all this: Are there not, however, *two other persons* in the divine nature manifestly signified thereby? Forasmuch as the Godhead, here imported by τῷ Θεῷ, is expressly applied both to the *Father* and the *Son*, in those words τῷ μυστηρίῳ τῷ Θεῷ, ἡ Πατρός, ἡ τῷ Χριστῷ. And that, I am sure, (should it reach no farther) is a full and irrefragable confutation of the *Socinians*, the grand and chief opposers of the doctrine now insisted upon. For these men deny not a *plurality* of persons in the Godhead from any allegation, or pretence of some peculiar repugnancy of the *number of*

three to the same, more than of any *other number*; but because they absolutely deny, that there can be any more persons in the God-head, *than only one*. And consequently, that a *duality*, or *binary* number of persons in it, would, in a *Socinian's* account, pass for no less an absurdity, than even a *Trinity* itself; the grand article controverted between us and them.

The words therefore being thus examined and explained, I shall draw forth the sense of them into this one proposition :

That a plurality of persons, or personal subsistences in the divine nature, is a great mystery, and so to be acknowledged by all who really are, and profess themselves Christians.

The discussion of which shall lie in these two things.

I. In shewing, what *conditions* are required to denominate a thing properly a *mystery*. And,

II. In shewing, that all *these conditions* meet in the article of the blessed *Trinity*.

I. And first for the first of these. The *conditions* required to constitute and denominate a thing properly a *mystery*, are these three.

I. That

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1. That the thing so denominated, be in itself really true, and not contrary to reason.

2. That it be a thing above the power and reach of mere reason to find it out, before it be revealed. And,

3. That being revealed, it be yet very difficult for, if not above finite reason fully to understand and comprehend it. And here,

1. For the first of these conditions; a mystery must be a thing *really true*, and by *no means contrary to reason*. Where let me lay down this rule or maxim, as the ground-work of all that is to follow; to wit, that *as nothing can be an article of faith, that is not true*, so neither can any thing be *true, that is irrational*. Some indeed lay this as their foundation, *that men in matters of religion are to deny and renounce their reason*; but if so, then let any one declare, why I am bound to embrace the *Christian religion*, rather than that of *Mahomet*, or of any other *impostor*; and, I suppose, you will in the first place tell me, because the *Christian religion was revealed and attested by God*; whereas others, opposing it, were not so. To which I answer first, that this very thing, *that it was thus attested by God*, is the greatest reason for our believing it true in the world; and as convincing, as any demonstration in the *mathematicks*; it being founded upon the essential,

fential, unfailing veracity of God, who can
 neither *deceive, nor be deceived*. But, then far-
 ther, in the second place, I ask, how I shall
 come to know, that this is *revealed by God*?
 Now here, if you will prove this to me, (it be-
 ing *matter of fact*) you must have recourse to
 all those grounds, upon which reason uses to
believe matters of fact, when past; and accord-
 ingly shew me, how that all these are to be
 found for the divine revelation of the Christian
 religion, and not of any other pretending to
 oppose or contradict it. And this I am sure is
 solid and true arguing in the case before us;
 and being so, what can it amount to less, than
 a just demonstration of the thing here intend-
 ed to be proved? I say, a demonstration pro-
 ceeding upon principles of *moral certainty*; a
 certainty full and sufficient, and such, as being
 denied, must infallibly draw after it as great
 an absurdity in reference to *practice*, as the de-
 nial of *any first principle can do in point of spe-*
culation. As for instance, I look upon the
 unanimous testimony of a competent number
 of sincere, disinterested eye or ear-witnesses;
 and, which is more, (in the present case in-
 spired too) all affirming the same thing to be a
 ground *morally certain, why we should believe*
that thing; forasmuch as the *denial of its cer-*
tainty would, amongst many other absurdities,

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run us upon this great one, that we can have no *assurance*, or *certain knowledge* of any thing, but what we ourselves have personally seen, heard, or observed with our own senses; which assertion, if stuck to, would be as absurd and inconvenient in the transactions of *common life*, as to deny, that two and two make four in *arithmetick*. And in good earnest it will be very hard (if possible) to assign any other sufficient reason, why our Saviour in *Mark xvi. 14.* upbraided some with their *unbelief* as inexcusable, only for *not believing those who had seen him after he was risen*.

In short, the ultimate object of faith is divine revelation, that is, I believe such a thing to be *true*, because it is revealed by God; but then my reason must prove to me, that it is revealed; so that, this way, reason is that, into which all religion is at last resolved.

And let me add a little farther that *no one truth can possibly contradict another truth*, for if *two truths might contradict*, then *two contradictions might be true*. And therefore, if it be *true in Christian religion*, that *one nature may subsist in three persons*, the same cannot be false in reason. Thus much, I confess, that take the thing abstract from divine revelation, there is nothing in reason able to prove that there is such a thing; but then, this also is as true, that

there is nothing in reason able to *disprove* it, and to evince it to be *impossible*.

But you will say, that for the same thing to be three, and one, is a contradiction, and therefore reason cannot but conclude it impossible. I answer, that for a thing to be one in that very respect, in which it is three, is a contradiction; but to assert, that that which is *one* in this respect, may be *three* in another, is no contradiction.

But you will reply, that the single nature of any person is uncommunicable to another, as the essence of *Peter* is circumscribed within the person of *Peter*, and so cannot be communicated to *Paul*.

In answer to this, let it be here observed, that this is the constant fallacy that runsthrough all the arguments of the *Socinians* in this dispute; and all that they urge against a triple subsistence of the divine nature, is still from instances taken from *created natures*, and applied to the divine; and because they see this impossible, or, at least, never exemplified in them, they conclude hence, that it must be so also in this.

But this is a gross and apparent error in argumentation; it being a mere transition à *genere ad genus*, which is to conclude the same thing of different kinds; and because this holds
true

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true in things of this nature, to conclude hence, that therefore the same must be true also in things that are of a clean different nature; is a manifest paralogism.

To all these arguments therefore, I oppose this one (I think) not irrational consideration: That it is a thing very agreeable even to the notions of bare reason to imagine, *that the divine nature has a way of subsisting very different from the subsistence of any created being.* For inasmuch as *nature* and *subsistence* go to the making up of a *person*, why may not the way of their subsistence be quite as different as their natures are confessed to be? One nature being infinite, the other finite. And therefore, though it be necessary in *things created* (as no one instance appears to the contrary) for *one single essence* to subsist in *one single person* and no more; does this at all prove, that the same must be also *necessary in God*, whose nature is wholly different from theirs, and consequently may differ as much in the manner of his subsistence, and so may have one and the *same nature* diffused into three distinct persons? This one consideration (I say) well weighed and applied, will retund the *edge* and *dint* of all the *Soci- nian* assaults against this article: Whom I have still observed to assert boldly, when they conclude weakly; and in all their arguments to

prove nothing more than this, that the greatest pretenders to, are not always the greatest masters of, *reason*.

But here, before I dismiss this particular, I shall observe this, that for a man to prove a thing clearly, is to bring it by certain and apparent consequence, from some principle in itself known and evident, and granted by all : Otherwise it would not be a demonstration, but an infinite progress.

Now this being supposed : In case any one shall so disprove the Trinity, as to shew, that it really contradicts some such principle of reason evident in itself, and universally granted by the unprejudiced apprehensions of mankind; I should not be afraid to expunge this article out of my creed, and to discharge any man living from a necessity of believing it. For God cannot enjoin any thing absurd or impossible : But for any man to assent to two contradictory propositions, as true, while he perceives them to be contradictory, is the first-born of impossibilities.

Reason therefore is undeservedly and ignorantly traduced, when it is set up and shot at, as the irreconcilable enemy of religion. It is indeed the very crown and privilege of our nature ; a ray of divinity sent into a mortal body : *The star that guides all wise men to Christ :*
The

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The lanthorn that leads the eye of faith, and is no more an enemy to it, than an obedient hand-maid to a discreet mistress. Those indeed, whose tenets will not bear the test of it, and whose ware goes off best in the dark rooms of ignorance and credulity, and whose *faith* has as much cause to *dread a discovery as their works*; these (I say) may decry reason; and that indeed not without reason.

For ask such, upon what grounds they believe the truth of Christian religion, whereas others so much oppose it: And here, instead of rational inducements, and solid arguments, we shall have long harangues of the *kingdom of Jesus Christ*, of *rolling upon the promises of the spirit of assurance*, and the *preciousness of gospel dispensations*, with many other such-like words, as shew that they have followed their own advice to others, and wholly renounced their reason themselves.

But I cannot think or persuade myself, that God gave us eyes, only that we may pluck them out, and brought us into the world with reason, that being born men, we might afterwards grow up and improve into brutes, and become elaborately irrational. No surely, reason is both the gift and image of God, and every degree of its improvement is a farther degree of likeness to him. And though I

cannot judge it a fit saying for a dying Christian to make, that wish of *Averroes*, *Sit anima mea cum philosophis*; yet while he lives, I think no Christian ought to be ashamed to wish, *Sit anima mea cum philosophia*. And for all these boastings of new *lights*, *inbeamings*, and *inspirations*; that man that follows his reason, both in the choice and defence of his religion, will find himself better led and directed by this one guide, than by an hundred *directories*. And thus much *for the first condition*.

2. The second condition required to denominate a thing properly a mystery, is, *that it be above the reach of reason to find it out, and that it be first knowable only by revelation*. This, I suppose, I shall not be called upon to prove, it being a thing clear in itself.

But we have been told by some, that there are some hints and traces of the article of the Trinity to be found in some heathen writers, as *Trismegistus* and *Plato*, who are said to make mention of it. To which I answer, first, that if there do occur such hints of a Trinity in such writers; yet it follows not hence, that they owed them to the invention of their own reason, but received them from others by tradition, who themselves first had them from revelation. But, secondly, to the case in hand; I answer more fully, that it cannot be denied,
but

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but that some Christians have endeavoured to defend the truth imprudently and unwarrantably, by bad arts, and falsifying of ancient writers; and that such places as speak of the Trinity are spurious, or at least suspicious: As the whole book that now goes under the name of *Trismegistus*, called his *Pæmander*, may justly be supposed to be.

But that we may a little aid and help out our apprehensions in conceiving of this great mystery, let us endeavour to see, whether upon the grounds and notions of reason, we can frame to ourselves any thing that may carry in it some shadow and resemblance at least of one single, undivided nature's casting itself into three subsistences, without receding from its own unity. And for this purpose, we may represent to ourselves an infinite rational mind, which, considered under the first and original perfection of *being* or *existence*, may be called the *Father*; inasmuch as the perfection of existence is the first and productive of all others. Secondly, in the same infinite mind may be considered the perfection of understanding, as being the first great perfection that issues from the perfection of existence, and so may be called the *Son*, who also is called $\delta \text{ λόγος}$, the *Word*, as being the first emanation of that infinite mind. And then, thirdly, when that

infinite mind, by its *understanding*, reflects upon its *own essential perfections*, there cannot but ensue *an act of volition and complacency in those perfections*, arising from such an intellectual reflection upon them ; which may be called the *Holy Ghost*, who therefore is said to proceed both from the *Father* and the *Son*, because there must be not only existence, but also understanding before there can be love and volition. Here then, we see, that one and the same mind is both *being, understanding, and willing* ; and yet we can neither say that being is understanding, nor that understanding is willing ; nor, on the contrary, that understanding is merely being, nor that willing is understanding. Forasmuch as the proper natural conception of one is not the conception of the other, nor yet commensurate to it. And this I propose, neither as a *full explication*, nor, much less, as a *just representation* of this great mystery ; but only (as I intimated before, and intend no more now) as some remote and faint resemblance, or adumbration thereof. For still this is, and must be acknowledge inconceivably above the reach and ken of any human intellect ; and as a depth, in which the tallest reason may swim, and, if it ventures too far, may chance to be swallowed up too,

Nay,

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Nay, I think, that it was a thing not only locked up from the researches of reason, amongst those that were led only by reason, I mean the *Gentiles*; but that it was also concealed from, or at best but obscurely known by the *Jewish* church. And *Peter Galatine* assigns a reason, why God was not pleased to give the *Jews* any express revelation of this mystery; namely, that people's great stupidity and grossness of apprehension, together with their exceeding proneness to idolatry; by reason of the former of which, they would have been apt to entertain very uncouth and mistaken conceptions of the Godhead and the three persons, as if they had been three distinct Gods; and thereupon to have been easily induced to an idolatrous worship and opinion of them; and therefore, that the unfolding of this mystery was reserved till the days of the *Messias*, by which time the world should, by a long increase of knowledge, grow more and more refined and prepared for the reception of this so sublime and mysterious an article.

This was his reason for God's concealing it from the *Jews*; for that God did so, the old testament, which is the great ark and repository of the *Jewish* religion, seems sufficiently to declare; there being no text in it, that plainly and expressly holds forth a Trinity of persons

persons in the Godhead. Several texts are indeed urged for that purpose, though (whatever they may allude to) they seem not yet to be of that force and evidence, as to infer what some undertake to prove by them. Such as are,

(1.) Those words in the first of *Genesis*, *Bara Elobim* : Where *Elobim* signifying God, and being of the plural number, is joined with *Bara*, *creavit*, a verb of the singular. Whence some collect, that the former word imports a plurality of persons, and the latter an unity of essence. But others deny that any such peculiar meaning ought or can be gathered from that, which is indeed no more than an idiom and propriety of the *Hebrew* language. So that *Elobim* applied to others besides God, is often joined with a singular number.

(2.) Another place alledged for the same purpose, is that in *Gen. i. 26*. *Let us make man, in our own image*, where they say that there is a consultation amongst many persons in the Godhead. But to this also it is answered, that the term *let us make*, does not of necessity imply any *plurality*, but may import only the *majesty* of the speaker; kings and princes being accustomed to speak of themselves in the *plural number* : As *we will, and require you*, and *it is our royal will and pleasure*. This is the common

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mon dialect of kings, and yet it infers in the speaker no plurality; for then surely a king would speak very unlike a monarch.

(3.) There is a third place also, in *Isa. vi. 3.* where the threefold repetition of *holy, holy, holy*, applied to God, is urged by some to relate distinctly to the three hypostases of the Godhead. But this is thought by others to have so little of an argument in it, as scarce to merit any answer; it being so usual with all nations and languages to express any thing *vehement* or *extraordinary*, by thrice repeating the word used by them: Suitable to which, are those expressions that occur in classic authors, as *Ter geminis tollit honoribus*, and *O ter felices*, and *Illi robur & æs triplex circa pectus erat*, with infinite the like instances: In all which, the manner of speaking serves only to express the greatness of the thing spoke of. So that these, and such like places of scripture, carry not in them any such evident proof of the Trinity, as to persuade us, that the *Jewish* church could from hence arrive to any clear knowledge of this article. The forementioned *Galatine* indeed affirms the *Talmudists* to speak several things concerning it very plainly; and from hence concludes, that in regard the *Talmud* is a collection of the several sayings and writings of the old *Jewish* doctors upon the old testament,

ment, it must import, that since they wrote such things of the *Trinity*, and the *Messias*, there was then a knowledge of these things in the *Jewish* church. But I fear the authority of those *Talmudical* writings will weigh so little in this case, that if the letter of the scripture will not otherwise speak a *Trinity*, but as it is helped out, and expounded by the *Talmud*, few sober persons will seek for it there. The only solid proof, that makes towards the eviction of a *Trinity* from thence, I conceive to lie in those texts that prove the divine nature of the *Messias*, whose coming was then expected by all the *Jews*. Otherwise, surely, the knowledge of this article could but very obscurely be gathered from the bare writings of *Moses* and the prophets, and consequently was by no means received with that explicitness in the ancient *Jewish* church, that it is now in the Christian.

As for the opinion of the modern *Jews* touching this matter, we shall find, that these acknowledge no such thing as a *Trinity*, but utterly reject and explode it. And as for the *Mahometan* religion, (which being a gallimaufry made up of many, partakes much of the *Jewish*) that also wholly denies it. And the professors of it, in all their publick performances of religious worship, with much zeal and earnestness

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ness frequently reiterate and repeat this article ; *There is but one God, there is but one God* ; not so much out of zeal to assert the *unity of the Godhead*, as to exclude the *Trinity of persons* maintained by the Christians.

I conclude therefore, that it is very probable, that the discovery of this mystery was a privilege reserved to bless the times of Christianity withal, and that the *Jews* had either none, or but a very weak and confused knowledge of it. It was the great *arcanum* for the receiving of which the world was to be many ages in preparing. As long as the *veil of the temple* remained, it was a *secret* not to be looked into ; an *holy of holies*, into which even the high priest himself did not enter. And thus much for the second condition required to make or constitute a mystery ; namely, that it be above the strength of *bare reason to find it out*, before it is revealed.

3. The third and last is this : *That after it is revealed, it be yet difficult to be understood.* And he who thinks the contrary, let him make trial. For although there is nothing in reason to *contradict*, yet neither is there any thing to *comprehend* it. We may as well shut a mountain within a mole-hill, or take up the ocean in a cockle-shell, as reach the stupendous sacred intricacies of the divine subsistence, by the
short

short and feeble notions of a created apprehension.

Reason indeed proves the *revelation* of it by God; but then having done this, here it stops, and pretends not to understand and fathom the nature of the thing *revealed*.

If any one should plead a parity of the case, as to this article of the *Trinity*, and that about *transubstantiation*; and alledge, that since we deny not a *Trinity*, though we understand it not, but account it a mystery, and so believe it; why may we not take *transubstantiation* also in the number of mysteries, and believe it, though it be intricate and impossible to be understood?

To this I answer, (1.) in general, that no man discoursing, or proceeding rationally upon this subject, refuses to believe *transubstantiation* merely upon this account, that it is *impossible to be understood*. (2.) I affirm, that the case between *transubstantiation* and the *Trinity* is very different; the former being contradicted by the judgment of that faculty, of which it is properly the object; the latter being not at all *contradicted*, but only *not comprehended* by the faculty, to which the judgment and cognizance of it does belong. To make which clear, we must observe, that both the bread and the body of Christ, about which *transubstantiation*

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is said to be effected, being endued with *quantity*, *colour*, and the like, are the *proper objects of sense*, and so fall under the cognizance of the *sight* and *touch*; which senses being entire, and acting as naturally they ought, they both can and do certainly judge of their *proper objects*, and upon such judgment find it to be a contradiction for a small body retaining its own proper dimensions, at the same time to have the dimensions of a body for times greater. For one body to be circumscribed, and so compassed in one place, and at the same time to fill a thousand more, I say it is a contradiction; for it makes the same thing in the very same respect to be *circumscribed* and *not to be circumscribed*; circumscribed, because encompassed in such a place; and yet not circumscribed, because extending itself beyond that place to many others.

But now, on the other side, the *divine nature* and the *Trinity* are not the *objects of sense*, and consequently sense passes no judgment upon them. But they are the objects of (and so only tryable by) the *mind*, and the *understanding*; taking in these things from the *reports not of sense*, but *revelation*. Which supreme faculty being thus informed by *revelation* tendering these reports to its apprehension, and withall finding that none of those rules or principles, by which it judges of the truth or falsity

of what it apprehends, do at all contradict what revelation thus speaks and reports of the *divine nature and the Trinity*; it rationally judges, that they may, and ought to be assented to.

For the stress of the point lies here, and let all the reason of mankind prove, if it can, *That wheresoever the denomination of three is ascribed to any nature, it must of necessity multiply the nature itself, and not only its relations.* Which being so, those that make the article of the *Trinity* parallel to that of *transubstantiation*, in point of its contrariety to reason, if they will speak and argue to the purpose, must undertake to prove, that for *one* infinite *being or nature* to be in any respect, or upon any account whatsoever, three, without a *triplication* of that nature, and so a loss of its unity, is as contrary and repugnant to some known principle of reason discoursing upon the reports of revelation, as for that thing, which all my senses tell me to be a little piece of bread, to be yet both for figure and dimension really a man's body, is contradictory to all those principles, by which sense judges of those things that properly fall under the judgment of sense.

Let this, I say, be clearly and conclusively made out, and the business is done. But till

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then, they must give us leave to judge, that there is as much difference between the article of the *Trinity as stated by us, and that of transubstantiation as stated by them*, as there is between *difficulty and contradiction*.

And now, if there be any, whose reason is so unruly and over-curious, as to be still inquisitive and unsatisfied, such must remember, that when we have made the utmost explanations of this article, we pretend not thereby to have *altered the nature of the subject we have been treating of*; which, after all, is *still a mystery*; and they must know moreover, that when the sacred mysteries of religion are discoursed of, the business of a Christian is sobriety and submission, and his duty to be *satisfied*, even though he were not *convinced*. The Trinity is a fundamental article of the Christian religion; and as he that denies it, may lose *his soul*; so he that too much strives to understand it, may lose *his wits*. Knowledge is nice, intricate, and tedious; but faith is easy; and what is more, it is safe. And why should I then unhinge my brains, ruin my mind, and pursue distraction in the disquisition of that which a little study would sufficiently convince me to be not intelligible? Or why should I by chewing a pill make it useless, which swallowed whole might be curing and restorative?

A Christian, in these matters, has nothing to do but to believe ; and since I cannot scientifically comprehend this mystery, I shall worship it with the religion of submission and wonder, and casting down my reason before it, receive it with the devotions of silence, and the humble distances of adoration.

But here having drawn the business so far, I cannot but take notice of some of those blasphemous expressions which the *Socinians* use, concerning the sacred mystery, of the *Trinity*; their terms (as I have collected some out of many) are such as these : “ *Deus tripersonatus. Idolum portentosum. Figmentum Satanae. Antichristi Cerberus. Triceps Geryon. Idolum trifrons. Monstrum triforme. Deus incognitus, adeoque procul rejiciendus, & Satanae conditori suo restituendus.*” Now, that the authors of these ugly appellations shew themselves not only bold and impious, but also (what by no means they would be thought) very unreasonable, will, I think, appear from these two considerations :

First, That the doctrine so broadly decried by them, is at least very difficult, and hardly comprehensible; and therefore, though it could not be *proved true*, yet, upon the same score, it can as hardly *be proved false*. But now these expressions ought to proceed not only upon the

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supposition of its bare falsity, but also upon the evidence, and undeniable *clearness of its falsity*; or they must needs be impudent and intolerable.

He who says, that it is *clear*, that there can be no such thing as the *quadrature of the circle*, makes an impudent assertion; for, though possibly there can be really no such thing, yet since there have been such considerable reasons for it, as to engage the greatest wits in the search after it, no man can rationally say, that it is *clear* and *manifest*, that there is no such thing. But besides, in this case, they deal very irrationally in rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity, because it is *not intelligible*; when not only in divinity, but also in philosophy, (where yet, not *faith*, but *strict ratiocination* should take place) they acknowledge many things, which the best reason will scarce be able to frame an explicit notion and apprehension of. Such as are the composition and division of *continued quantities*, and the like; which these men, I believe, will not deny, though it would set them hard to give a clear account of them.

Secondly, The same charge of absurdity lies against these men upon this account, that they prefer their particular reason before the united reason of a *much greater number than themselves*; every one of which were of as great industry to search, and of as great abilities to

understand the mysteries of divinity, as these men can be presumed to be.

Now, as this is much beside *good manners*, so indeed it is no less short of *good reason*; which will prove thus much at least: That when a few learned persons deny a proposition, and others *forty times more numerous, and altogether as learned*, do unanimously affirm it; it is very probable, that the truth stands rather with the majority.

For if I should demand of these men, how they come to judge the doctrine of the Trinity to be false? they must tell me, that they have studied the point, considered the text, examined it by the principles of reason, and that by the use of these means they come at length to make this conclusion.

But to this I answer, that others, who have studied the point as much, considered the text as exactly, and examined it by as strong principles of reason, as their opposites could pretend to, and so standing upon equal ground with them in point of *abilities*, have much the advantage of them in point of *number*.

But you will say; must I therefore conclude, that what is affirmed by such a majority of persons so qualified is certainly true? I answer, no; but this I assert, that it is great reason, though their assertion appear never so *strange* to me, that I should yet *suspend my judgment*,
and

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and not peremptorily conclude it *false*; since there is hardly any *means*, or *way* of ratiocination used by one to prove it a *falseity*, but by the very *same way* and *means* others persuade themselves, that they as strongly prove it to be a *truth*.

And thus I think, that these mens exceptions against this great article are, to such as understand reason, sufficiently proved irrational. But since these men reject the doctrine of the *Trinity* upon pretence both of its *impiety* and *absurdity*, it is but requisite, that they should acquit themselves in all their doctrine, from holding any thing either *impious* or *absurd*. But yet, that they cannot do so, these following positions maintained by them, will, I believe, demonstrate.

1. To assert, as *Volkelius*, in his second book *De verâ religione*, and the fourth chapter, not obscurely does, the *matter* of the universe to be a *passive principle* eternally co-existing with God *the active*; is impious, and not consistent with God's infinite power; for if *matter* has its being from itself, it will follow, that it can preserve itself in being against all opposition, and consequently, that God cannot destroy it, which makes him not omnipotent.

2. To allow God's power to be infinite, and yet his substance to be *finite*, is monstrously absurd; but to assert, as *Crellius* in his book

De attributis Dei, in the 27th chapter, does, that his substance is circumscribed within the compass of the highest heaven, is clearly to make it infinite.

3. To allow all God's *prophecies* and *predictions* recorded in scripture, of *future contingent passages*, depending upon the free choice of man's will, to have been certain and infallible, and yet his *prescience* or *fore-knowledge* of the same contingent things not to be certain, but only conjectural, as *Socinus*, in the 8th chapter of his *prelections*, does affirm ; is out of measure absurd and ridiculous.

4. To affirm Christ to be a *mere creature*, and no more, and yet to contend, that he is to be *invoked and worshipped with divine worship* ; is exceedingly absurd, and contrary to all the discourses of right reason ; and withal, as offensive and scandalous to *Jews* and *Turks*, and *suck-like*, as the bare affirmation of his divine nature can be pretended to be. But *Socinus*, though he denies this, yet is so earnest for the divine *adoration* and *invocation* of Christ, that he affirms, that of the two, it is better to be a *Trinitarian*, than not to ascribe this to him.

5. To assert, that the people of God, under the *Jewish* œconomy, lay under the obligation of no *precept to pray to God*, as *Volkelius*, in his 4th book *De verâ religione*, and the 9th chapter,

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ter, positively affirms; is an assertion highly *impious*, and to all pious minds abominable.

6. To assert, that it is lawful for a man to tell a lie, to secure himself from some great danger or inconvenience, as the same *Volkelius* in the 4th book, and 19th chapter, does; is such a thing, as not only consists not with piety and sincerity, but tends to drive even *common honesty* and society out of the world.

7. To assert, that it is *unlawful for Christians in any case to wage war*, as *Socinus* himself does in his 2d epistle to *Christophorus Morstinus*, a *Polonian* commander, in which he allows him to bring his army into the field *in terrorem hostium*, provided that he neither strikes a stroke, nor draws blood, nor cuts off a limb: This, I say, is grossly absurd and unnatural, and contrary to the eternal principle of self-preservation; as engaging men, even for conscience sake, to surrender their lives and fortunes to any thief or murderer, that shall think fit to require them. Neither can *Socinus*, in reason, so urge those words of our Saviour, in *Mat. v. 39. of not resisting evil*, in this case, if he will be but true to his own principle. For in his 3d book *De Christo servatore*, and the 6th chapter, disputing against Christ's satisfaction, he pleads, that in regard it is (as he says) *contrary to reason, though the scripture should never so often as-*
U 4 *firm*

firm it, yet it ought not to be omitted or assented to. Now, if this be his rule, I demand of him, whether, for a man to preserve himself, and that even with the destruction of the life of the person assailing him, supposing that he cannot possibly do it otherwise, be not as undeniable a dictate or principle of natural reason, as any that he can pretend to be contradicted by Christ's *satisfaction*. And therefore, if he can lay aside Christ's *satisfaction*, though the scripture were never so express for it, in regard of the contrariety he pretends in it to reason; why may not we upon the same grounds assert the necessity of self-preservation in the instance of war, though the scripture expressly forbids it; Since for a man to relinquish his own defence, is indubitably contrary to the dictates of nature, and consequently of reason.

But we need not recur to this, for the warranting men under the gospel to defend their lives, though with the destruction of those that would take them away. Only this I alledge as an *argument ad hominem*, which sufficiently shews, how slight and desultorious this man is in his principles and way of arguing, while at one time he frames to himself a principle for his present turn, and at another makes assertions, and raises discourses, which that principle most directly overthrows. Now all the foremen-

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tioned absurdities (with many more that might be reckoned) are the tenets of those who deny the article of the *Trinity*, because (forsooth) it is *impious* and *absurd*; that is, who strain at one *gnat*, having already swallowed so many vast *camels*. And yet these are the persons, who in all their writings have the face to own themselves to the world for those heroes, whom God, by his special providence, has raised up to explain Christian religion, and to *reform the doctrine of the church*. I suppose, just in the same sense, that the school of *Calvin* was to reform her *discipline*.

And now in the last place: Because this article is of so great moment, and stands (as it were) in the very front of our religion; so that it is of very high concernment to all to be found and thorough-paced in the belief of it: I shall shew,

1. What have been the causes that have first unsettled, and at the last destroyed the belief of it in some. And,

2. What may be the best means to settle and preserve the belief of it in ourselves and others.

For the first of these: There are three things, which I think have been the great causes that have took some off from the belief of this article. As,

(1.) That

(1.) That bold, prophane, and absurd custom of some persons, in attempting to *paint and represent it in figure*. He who *paints God*, does a contradiction; for he attempts to make that *visible*, which he professes to be *invisible*. The ministers of *Transylvania* and *Sarmatia*, rank assertors of the *Socinian* heresy, * in a certain book, (wherein they make *confession of their faith as to these articles*) insist upon nothing so much, nor indeed so plausibly, for their rejection of the article of the Trinity, as those several strange *pictures, and images of the Trinity*, which some persons had set up in several of their churches: Sometimes describing it *by one head carved into three faces*, to which, so set up in a certain church, they subjoin this distich;

*Mense trifrons isto Janum pater urbe bifrontem
Expulit, ut solus regnet in orbe trifrons;*

That is to say, that the *God having three faces*, had driven, or (if you will) *outfaced poor Janus out of the world, who had but two*. And likewise elsewhere such another;

*Jane Biceps, anni tacitè labentis origo;
Trifrontem pellas, ni miser esse velis.*

* See a *Latin* book in 4to, entitled, *Præmonitiones Christi, & Apostolorum, per ministros quosdam in Sarmatiâ & Transylvaniâ, &c.*

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Sometimes also they represent it by a *ring set with diamonds, in three equi-distant places of it*; and sometimes by the *picture of three men of an equal pitch sitting together at one table, and upon one seat*: And sometimes the same is expressed by the *image of an old man, a child, and a dove*; one signifying the Father, one the Son, and the third the Holy Ghost: All which things being so contrary to the very natural notions which reason has of God, have brought many sober parts of the world to nauseate and abhor our whole religion, and to reject Christianity as only a new scheme of the old *Gentile* idolatry: And withal, have warranted the fore-mentioned hereticks to think they had cause for all those vile and wretched appellations, with which we shew how they bespattered this divine mystery; which blasphemies will, no doubt, be one day laid at the door, not of those only who *denied*, but of those also who *painted* the Trinity; and by so doing, made others to *deny* it. And indeed, so far has the common sort of mankind took offence at these things, that if the belief of a God were not very deeply imprinted in man's nature, such men's cursed irrational boldness, in presuming to paint him, would go very near to bring all those about them, by degrees, to question the very Deity itself.

2. A second cause of the same evil, is the equally bold and insignificant terms which some of the schoolmen have expressed this great article by ; who pursuing their own *phænomena* as undoubted truths, speak as peremptorily and confidently of this profound mystery, as if it were a thing obvious to the first apprehensions of sense. It was a good and a pious saying of an ancient writer, *Periculosum est de Deo etiam vera dicere*. No wonder therefore, if these men, discoursing of the nature and subsistence of God, in a language neither warrantable nor apprehensible, have by their *modalities*, *suppositivities*, *circum-incessions*, and twenty such other *chimeras*, so misrepresented this adorable article of the Trinity to mens reason, as to bring them first to loath, and at length to deny it.

3. A third cause, which has much weakened some mens belief of this article, has been the imprudent building it upon some texts of scripture, which indeed will evince no such thing. *Such* as those places which I mentioned out of the old testament ; and *such*, as one of the ancients once brought for a proof of the eternal generation, and Deity of the *Word*, from that expression of *David*, in *Psal. xliv. 1. Quisquamne dubitat* (says he) *de Divinitate Filii, cum legerit illud Psalmistæ, cor meum eructavit verbum bonum?* Concerning which, and the like allegations,

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tions, I shall only make one very obvious, but as true (and perhaps too true) a remark, that whatsoever is produced and insisted upon in behalf of any great and momentous point of religion, if it comes not fully close and home to the same, it is always found much more effectual to expose the *truth* it is brought for, than to support it, and to *confirm* the *heretick* it is brought against, than to *convince* him.

And thus having shewn some of the causes that undermine mens belief of the article of the Trinity; I shall now assign some means also, to fix and continue it in such minds, as do already embrace it. And these shall be briefly two.

1. To acquiesce in the bare revelation of the thing itself; and in those expressions, under which it is revealed. As for the thing itself, God has expressly said, that there are *three* above the rank of created beings, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*. And as for the words, in which he has conveyed this to us, they are few, easy, and intelligible, and to be believed just as they are proposed; that is, simply, and in general, and without entring too far into particulars.

2. To suppress all nice, and over-curious enquiries into the peculiar nature, reason, and manner of this mystery. For God having not thought fit to reveal this to us any farther, than

he has yet actually done, sufficiently declares it to have been his intent, that it should indeed be no farther known, nor indeed searched into by us; and perhaps so far as it is yet unknown, it may, to a created reason, be also *unknowable*. For when we are once assured that the thing itself *is*; for us to amuse ourselves, and others, with bold perplexing questions, (as they can be no better) *how*, and *which way* it comes to be so, especially in matters relating to Almighty God, must needs be equally irreverent and impertinent. Those words of an ancient commentator upon St. *John*, contain in them an excellent rule, and always to be attended to, *Firmam fidem* (says he) *mysterio adhibentes, nunquam, in tam sublimibus, illud quomodo aut cogitemus, aut proferamus*. Which rule, had it been well observed, both in this, and some other articles of our religion, not only the peace of particular churches and consciences, but also the general peace of *Christendom*, might in great measure have been happily preserved by it.

Let this therefore be fixed upon, that there is no *obedience* comparable to that of the understanding; no temperance, which so much commends the soul to God, as that which shews itself in the restraint of our *curiosity*. Besides which two important considerations, let us consider also, that an over anxious scrutiny into
such

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such mysteries, is utterly useless, as to all purposes of a rational enquiry. It *wearies* the mind, but not *informs* the judgment. It makes us conceited, and fantastical in our notions, instead of being sober and wise to salvation. It may provoke God also, by our pressing too much into the secrets of heaven, and the concealed glories of his nature, to desert and give us over to strange delusions. For they are only *things revealed*, (as Moses told the Israelites, in Deut. xxix. 29.) *which belong to the sons of men* to understand and look into, as the sole and proper privilege allowed them by God, to exercise their noblest thoughts upon : But as for such high mysteries as the Trinity, as the subsistence of *one nature in three persons*, and of three persons in one and the same individual nature, these are to be reckoned in the number of such sacred and *secret things*, as belong to God alone perfectly to know, but to such poor mortals as we are, humbly to *fall down before*, and adore.

To which God, incomprehensible in his nature, and wonderful in his works, be rendered and ascribed, (as is most due) all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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SERMON VIII.

Ill-disposed *Affections*, both naturally and penally the Cause of Darknefs and Error in the *Judgment*.

2 THESS. ii. 11.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye.

OF all the fatal effects of sin, none looks so dreadfully, none strikes so just an Horror into considering minds, as that every sinful action a man does, naturally disposes him to another; and that it is hardly possible for him to do any thing so ill, but that it proves a *preparative* and *introduction* to the
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doing of something *worse*. Upon which account, that notable imprecation of the *Psalmist*, upon his own and the church's enemies, in *Psal. lxxix. 28.* namely, *That they may fall from one wickedness to another*, is absolutely the bitterest and most severe of any extant in the whole book of God, as being indeed the very abridgment of that grand repository of curses, the *xxviiith* chapter of *Deuteronomy*; and that with the addition of something besides, and of so much a more killing malignity, than all of them put together; by how much the evil of *sin* is confessedly greater, than the evil of any *suffering* for it whatsoever. The like instances to which, we have in the text now before us, of a sort of men, first casting off the *love of the truth*, and from thence passing into a *state of delusion*; and lastly, settling in a steady, fixed *belief of a lie*. By such wretched gradations is it, that sin commonly arrives at its full *ἀκμή*, or maturity. So that in truth, it is the only *perpetual motion* which has yet been found out, and needs nothing but a *beginning* to keep it incessantly *going on*. Accordingly, as every immoral act in the immediate and direct tendency of it, is certainly a *step downwards*, and a very large one too; so in all motions of *descent*, it is seldom or never found, that a thing so moving makes any stop in its fall, till it is fallen

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so far, that it is past falling any farther. And much the same is the case with a man, as to his *spirituals*; after he has been long engaged in a course of sinning, his progress in it grows infinite, and his return *desperate*.

Now in the words I have here pitched upon, as they stand in coherence with the precedent and subsequent verse, there are these two things to be considered :

First, A severe judgment denounced against a certain sort of men; namely, *that God would send them such strong delusion, that they should believe a lye.* And,

Secondly, The meritorious procuring cause of this judgment in the foregoing verse; to wit, *their not receiving the love of the truth.*

Where it is manifest, that by the words *truth*, and *a lye*, are not to be here meant, all *truth* and *falsehood* generally or indefinitely speaking, nor yet more particularly all that is *true* or *false* upon a philosophical account. For these truths or falsehoods the Apostle does not in this place concern himself about; but such only as belong properly to religion, with reference to the worship of Almighty God, and the salvation of mens souls. In a word, by *truth* here, is

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meant nothing else but the gospel, or doctrine of Christianity; nothing being more frequent with the inspired penmen of holy writ, than to express the Christian religion by the name of *truth*; and that sometimes absolutely, and without any epithet or addition, and sometimes with some additional term of specification; as in *Tit. i. 1.* it is called, *The truth according to godliness*; and in *Ephes. iv. 15.* *The truth as it is in Jesus*; with the like in several other places. So that still the great ennobling *characteristick* of the gospel, is *truth*; *truth* eminently and transcendently *such*; and for that cause, by a distinguishing excellency, called *the truth*; from whence, by irrefragable consequence, it must also follow, *that whatsoever is not truth, can be no part of Christian religion.* A bottom so firm and sure for Christianity to rest upon, that it cannot be placed upon a surer and more unshakable; besides this farther advantage accruing to it thereby, that as *truth* and *goodness* by an eternal, indissoluble union, (as strong as nature, or rather as the God of nature can make it) stand essentially and inseparably combined, and even identified with one another; so, upon the same account, we may be assured, that the *goodness* of the gospel cannot but adequately match and keep pace with the *truth* of it; both of them being perfectly commensurate,

both

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both of them equally properties of it, equally included in, and flowing from its very constitution. So that the gospel being thus held forth to the world, as the liveliest representation, and fullest transcript of those two glorious perfections of the divine nature, to wit, *its truth and goodness*; it must needs, by the first of them, recommend itself to our understandings, as the most commanding object of our *esteem*, and by the other to our *wills*, as the most endearing object of our *choice*.

Which being thus premised, if we would bring the entire sense of the words into one proposition, it may, I conceive, not unfitly be comprehended in this, *viz.*

That the not entertaining a sincere love and affection for the duties of religion, does both naturally, and by the just judgment of God besides, dispose men to errors and deceptions about the great truths of religion.

This, I say, seems to me to take in the *main*, if not *whole* design of the words; for the better prosecution of which, I shall cast what I have to say upon them, under these following particulars: As,

I. I shall shew, how the mind of man *can believe a lye.*

II. I shall shew, what it is *to receive the love of the truth.*

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III. I shall shew, how the *not receiving the love of the truth* comes to have such an influence upon the understanding or *judgment*, as to dispose it to *error and delusion*.

IV. I shall shew, how God can be properly said to *send such delusions*.

V. Since his sending them, is here mentioned as a *judgment*, (and that a very great one too) I shall shew, wherein *the greatness of it consists*. And,

VI. And *lastly*, I shall improve the point into some useful consequences and deductions from the whole.

Of each of which in their order. And,

I. For the first of them. *To shew, how the mind of man can believe a lye*. There is certainly so great a suitableness between truth, and an human understanding, that the understanding of itself can no more believe a lye, than the taste rightly disposed can pronounce a bitter thing sweet. The formal cause of all assent, is the *appearance of truth*; and if a lye is believed, it can be so no farther, than as it carries in it the *appearance of truth*. But then, what, and whence are these *appearances*? *Appearance*, no doubt, is a relative term, and must be between two; for one thing could not be said to appear, if there were not another for it to appear to. So that there must be both

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an *object* and a *faculty*, before there can be an *appearance*; and consequently, from one of these two must spring all falshood at any time belonging to it. But the question is, *from which of them?* And in answer to it, it is certain, that the object itself cannot cause a false appearance of itself. For if so, when the mind has conceived a false apprehension of God, God who is the object, would be the cause of that false apprehension. But it is certain, that objects operate not efficiently upon the faculties; for if they should, since the object is the same to all, *viz.* both those who entertain *true*, and those who entertain *false* apprehensions of it, it would be impossible for the same thing, so far as it is the same, to produce such contrary effects. It is the same body which appears to one of such a shape, and to another of a quite different. And therefore, the difference must needs be on the beholder's side, and rest in the faculty of perception, not in the thing perceiv'd. This we may pronounce confidently and truly, that the object duly circumstantiated is never in fault, why it is not rightly apprehended. Objects are merely passive; and if they were not so, men would certainly be both learned, and better than they are; for neither can learning, nor religion thrust itself into the heads or hearts of men, whether they will or no. Truth
shews

shews itself to be truth, and falshood represents itself as falshood, (and so far is a good representer) whether men apprehend them so or no. For the object is not to be condemned for the failures of the faculty, any more than a man, who speaks audibly and intelligibly, is to be blamed for not being heard; no body being bound to find *words* and *ears* too.

Well then; since a lye cannot be believed, but under the appearance of truth, and since a lye cannot give itself any such appearance, it is evident, that if any man believes a lye, it is from something in himself that he does so. There are lyes, errors, and heresies about the world, both plausible and infinite, but then they naturally appear what they are; and if truth be naked to the skin, error is and must be so to the bone; and the fairest falshood can no more oblige assent, than the best dressed evil can oblige the choice.

And thus having given both *falshood*, and the *devil*, the father of it, *their due*, and cleared even the grossest lye from being the cause that it is believed, and thereby left it wholly at the door of him who believes it; let us in the next place enquire, what may be the causes on the believer's part, which make any object, and particularly a lye, appear otherwise to him, than really it is, and upon that account gain his belief. Now these are two, 1. An

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1. An undue distance between the faculty and its proper object.

2. An indisposition in the faculty itself. And,

1. For the first of these. As *approximation* is one necessary condition of *perception*; so, too much distance prevents and hinders it, by setting the object too far out of our reach, and if the apprehensive faculty offers at an object so placed, and falls short of the apprehension of it, the fault is not in the object, but in that. And here, by *distance*, I mean not only an interval in point of *local position*, which, if too great, certainly hinders all corporeal perception; but likewise a *distance, or rather disparity, of natures*; such as is between *finite and infinite, material and spiritual* beings, consisting in the great *disproportion* there is between one and the other. And from hence it is, that the mind of man is incapable of apprehending any thing almost of *God*, or indeed of *Angels*; the distance between their natures being so exceeding great. For though *God*, as the Evangelist *St. Luke* tells us, in *Acts* xvii. 27. *be not far from every one of us*; nay, as it is in the next verse, that he is so near, or rather intimate to us, *that in him we live and move, and have our being*; so that it is as impossible for us to *exclude* him, as it is to *comprehend* him; yet still the vast *difference* of his nature from ours, makes

the *distance* between them so unspeakably great, that neither can our corporeal, nor intellectual powers form any true idea of him. And from hence it is, that there is nothing, about which the mind, and apprehensive faculties of man, have so frequently and foully blundered, as about the divine nature and *persons*, and (what is founded upon both) the divine *worship*. But,

2. The other cause, which makes any object, and particularly *a lye*, appear otherwise than really it is, is the *indisposition* of the intellectual faculty; which indisposition, in some degree or other, is sure to follow from sin, both original and actual. For so much as there is of deviation from the eternal rules of right reason and morality in the soul; so much there will of necessity be of darkness in it too; and so much of darkness as there is in it, so far must it be unavoidably subject to pass a false judgment upon most things that come before it. Otherwise there is nothing in reason, considered purely and simply as such, which is, or can be unsuitable to religion, or indeed to the nature of any thing; but so much the contrary, that if we could imagine a man all reason, without any byass from his sensitive part, it were impossible, but that, upon the first sufficient offer, he should (as we may so express it) *with both arms* embrace religion. But the
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case has been much altered since the fall of our first parents, and the fatal blow thereby given to all the powers of man's mind; besides the farther debilitation and distemper brought upon it, by many actual and gross sins. So that now the understandings of men are become like some bodily eyes, disabled from an exact discernment of their proper object, both by a natural *weakness*, and a supervening *soreness* too.

And thus I have accounted for the true cause which sometimes prostitutes the noble understanding of man to the lowest of dishonours, the *belief of a lye*; namely, either the *remoteness* of the faculty (whether in point of *distance* or *difference*) from its object, or some *weakness* or *disorder* in it; either of which will be sure to pervert its operation; and then a fault in the first apprehension of any thing, will not fail to produce a false judgment, and that a false belief likewise, about the same. And so I proceed to the

II. Particular proposed, *viz.* to shew *what it is to receive the love of the truth*,

And this we shall find implies in it these two things:

1. An high *esteem* and *valuation* of the real worth and excellency of it; this is the first and leading act of the mind. Truth must be first

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enthroned in our *judgment*, before it can *reign*
in our *desires*; and as it is the *leading faculty*, so
it is the measure of the rest: For no man's *love*
of any thing can rise above his *esteem* of it, nor
can his *appetites* exert themselves upon any ob-
ject, not first vouched by his *apprehensions*. For
which cause, the Holy Ghost in scripture, the
better to advance religion in our thoughts, re-
presents it by things of all others the most
highly accounted of in the world, as *crowns*,
thrones, *kingdoms*, *hidden treasure*, and the like;
all which expressions, though far from being
intended according to the strict and philosophi-
cal truth of things, but rather as allusions to
them, yet still were founded in the universally
acknowledged course of nature, which ever was,
and will be, for men to be first allured by the
worth of things, before they can desire the *pro-*
perty or possession of them; and to consider the
value, before they design the *purchase*. But,
be the matter as it may, our *affections* (to be
sure) will *bid* nothing for any thing, till our
Judgment has set *the price*. Thus St. Paul e-
vinces his love to Christ, from his transcendent
esteem of him; *I account all things* (says he) *but*
dung and dross, that I may win Christ, Phil. iii.
8. And he who accounts a thing as *dung*, will
no doubt trample upon it as such. The rule
of contrarieties will be found a clear illustration
of

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of the case. For *hatred* generally begins in *contempt*, or something very like it; and it is certain in matter of *fact*, as well as *reason*, that we leave off to *love* any thing or person, as soon as we begin to *despise* them. He, who in scorn turns away his eye from looking upon an object, will hardly be brought to reach out his hand after it: Let a man therefore set his understanding faculty on work, and put it to examine and consider, to view and review the intrinsic value of religion, *what it is, and what it offers*, before he proceeds to make it his portion so far, as to be ready to quit all the world for it, should they both come to rival his choice as competitors; let him, I say, by a strict and impartial enquiry, descend into himself, and see whether he can upon these terms (for lower and easier it knows none) judge it absolutely eligible; and if not, let him assure himself, that without a *passport* from the judgment, it will never gain a free and full *admittance* into the affections. For still it is through the eye that love enters into the heart: Nay, so mighty an influence has the judging faculty in this case, that it is much disputed, whether the *last dictate* of the judgment about any object does not necessarily determine, and draw after it the choice of the will; and perhaps there is scarce any point in moral philosophy
of

of a nicer speculation, and an harder decision; for as the affirmation of this on the one side seems to border upon Stoicism, and to entrench upon the freedom of the will; which after the supposal of all things requisite to its acting, ought nevertheless still to retain a power to exert, or not exert an act of volition: So on the other side, to affirm, that after the understanding has made the last proposal of the object to the will, the will may yet refuse it, and go contrary to it, seems to infer this great inconvenience, that the will, in order to its acting, needs not the preceding act or conduct of the intellect to make a sufficient proposal of the object to it, since after it is so proposed, it may notwithstanding divert its actings quite another way; and then, if it can, in this manner proceed without a guide, the will is not *so blind a faculty* as the schools make it. For he who goes one way, when his guide directs him another, manifestly shews that he both can, and does go without him. But I shall dispute this point no farther; it being (as I conceive) sufficient for our present purpose, that the act of the understanding proposing the object, must of necessity precede, whether the act or choice of the will follow it or no. Though for my own part, I cannot see, that the holding the necessity of the will's following the last dictate or

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proposal of the understanding, does at all prejudice its freedom ; (which is rather opposed to *coaction from without*, than to a *determination from within*) forasmuch as it was in the power of the will to have diverted the understanding from its application to any object, before it came to form its last judgment of it ; and consequently, the whole proceeding of the understanding being under the free permission of the will, the act of the will closing with this last determination, was originally and virtually free, though formally and immediately in this latter sense, necessary : As God necessarily does, what he first absolutely decreed, and yet the whole act is free, since the decree itself was the free issue and result of his will. But I beg pardon, if I have dwelt too long upon this point. It was, because I thought it requisite to shew, what is the part and office, and how great the force and power of the *understanding*, in recommending the truths of religion to the souls of men ; that so they may not acquiesce in a slight, superficial judgment, or apprehension of them ; which, we may rest satisfied, will never have any considerable effect, or work any thorough change upon the heart ; and if so, all will come to nothing ; for the foundation is ill laid, and the superstructure cannot be firm. And upon this account, no doubt it is, that the

scripture ascribes so much to *faith*; indeed, in effect, the whole work of man's salvation; and yet it is but an act of the understanding, and properly and strictly speaking, can be no more: Yet nevertheless, of such a mighty and controuling influence upon the will is it, that if it be strong, vigorous, and of the right kind, it draws the whole soul after it, and works all those wonders, which stand recorded of it in the 11th of the *Hebrews*, which from first to last is but a panegyrick upon the invincible strength, and heroick atchievements of this grace. In a word, if a man, by *faith*, can bring his understanding to receive, and entertain the divine truths of the gospel so, as to look upon the promises of it as conveying the greatest good and happiness to man, that a rational nature is capable of, and the threatnings of it as denouncing the bitterest and most insupportable evils, that a created being can sink under, and both of them as things of certain and infallible event: This is for a man truly to value his religion, and to lay such a foundation of it in his judgment, as shall never disappoint or shame his practice. Accordingly in the

II. place, The other thing implied in, and intended by the receiving the love of the truth, is the *choice* of it, as of a thing transcendently good,

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good, and particularly agreeable to our condition. *Generals*, we commonly say, are *fallacious*; but it is certain, that they are always *faint*. And therefore, it is not merely what is good, as to the general notion of it, (which can minister to little more than bare theory and discourse) but particularly what is *good for me*, which must engage my *practice*. To *esteem* a thing, we have shewn, is properly an act of the understanding; but to *choose* it, is the part and office of the will. And *choosing* is a considerable advance beyond bare esteem; forasmuch as it is the end of it, and consequently perfects it, as the end does every action, which is directed to it. It is the most proper, genuine, and finishing act of love. For the great effect of love, is to unite us to the thing we love; and the *will* is properly the uniting faculty, and choice the uniting act, which brings the soul and its beloved object together. Judgment and esteem, indeed, is that which offers and recommends it to the soul; but it is choice which *makes the match*. For the truth is, the soul of man can do no more, nor reach farther, than first to *esteem* an object, and then to *choose* it. And therefore, till we have made religion our fixed choice, it only floats in the imagination, and is but the business of talk and fancy. But it is the heart after all, which must appropriate

and take hold of the great truths of Christianity for its portion, its happiness, and chief good. And then, and not till *then*, a man is practically, and in good earnest a Christian; and that which before was but *notion* and opinion, hereby passes into reality and experience; and from a mere name, into the nature and substance of religion. For still, if a man would make his faith, or religion, a vital principle for him to live and act by, it must be such an one as the Apostle tells us, *works by love*; there must be something of this blessed flame to invigorate, and give activity to it. But where a man neither loves, nor likes the thing he believes, it is odds but in a little time he may be brought also to cast off the very belief itself; and, in the mean while, it is certain, that it can have no efficacy, no operation, or influence upon his life or actions; which is worse than no belief at all; for better, a great deal, *none*, than to *no purpose*.

And thus having shewn, what is meant by, and implied in, *the receiving the love of the truth*, it may, I conceive, help us to an easy and natural account of its opposite or contrary; to wit, the rejecting, or not receiving the same; the great sin, as we before observed, for which the persons here in the text stand concluded under so severe a doom. For the farther

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ther explication of which, we may very rationally suppose the condition of those men to have been this, *viz.* That upon the preaching of Christianity, the truth of it quickly overpowered their assent, and broke in upon their apprehensions with the highest evidence and conviction; but the searching purity and spirituality of the same doctrines equally encountering their worldly interests, and their predominant beloved corruptions, soon caused in their minds a secret loathing of the severity of those truths, and so by degrees, a direct hatred and hostility against them, as the great disturbers of those pleasures, and interrupters of the caresses of those lusts, which had so bewitched their hearts, and seized their affections. It is wonderful to consider, what a strange combat and scuffle there is in the soul of man, when clear truths meet with strong corruptions; one faculty or power of it embracing a doctrine, because true; and another with no less fury rising up against it, because severe and disagreeable. Thus, what should be the reason, that those high and excellent precepts of Christianity, requiring *purity of heart, poverty of spirit, chastity of mind, hatred of revenge*, and the like, find so cold a reception, or rather so sharp a resentment in the world? Is it because men think they are not truths? By no means, but

because they are severe, grating, uneasy truths; they believe them sufficiently, and more than they desire, but they cannot love them; and for that reason, and no other, they are rejected, and thrown aside in the lives and practices of men; not because they cannot, or do not convince their understandings, but because they thwart, and bid defiance to their inclinations. Truth is so connatural to the mind of man, that it would certainly be entertained by all men did it not by accident contradict some beloved interest or other. The thief hates the break of day; not but that he naturally loves the light as well as other men; but his condition makes him dread and abhor that, which of all things he knows to be the likeliest means of his discovery. Men may sometimes frame themselves to hear and attend to the mortifying truths of Christianity; but then they hear them only as they use to hear of the death of friends, or the story of a lost estate; they are *true*, but *troublesome* and vexatious. So often does the irksomeness of the thing reported make men angry with the truth of the report, and sometimes with the very person of the reporter too. And therefore, let none wonder, if God inflicts so signal a judgment upon this sort of sin: For when men shall resolutely reject clear, pregnant, and acknowledged (as well as important) truths,

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truths, only because they press hard upon their darling sin, and would knock them off from the pleasing embraces of the world, and the flesh, and from dying in them; what do they else, but sacrifice the glory of their nature, their reason, to their brutality? and make their noblest perfections bow down, and stoop to their basest lusts? What do they, I say, but crush and depress truth, to advance some pitiful, sensual pleasure in the room of it; and so, like *Herod*, strike off the *Baptist's* head, only to reward the dances of a strumpet? This is the great load of condemnation, which lies so heavy upon the world, (as *St. John* tells us) *That men see the light, but love darkness*, bend before the truth of a doctrine, but abhor its strictness and spirituality. The doctrine of Christianity being in this, like that forerunner of Christ just now mentioned by us; who was indeed (as our Saviour himself stiled him) a *shining*, but withal a *burning light*. And as the shining both of the one and the other, in the glorious evidence of truth beaming out from both, could not but, even in spite of sin, and all the *powers of darkness*, be infinitely pleasing to all who had the sight thereof; so its *burning quality* exerting itself in the searching precepts of self-denial and mortification, was, no doubt, to all vicious and depraved minds, altogether

as tormenting and intolerable. And so I proceed to the

III. Particular proposed by us. Which was to shew, *how the not receiving the love of the truth into the will and affections, comes to dispose the understanding to error and delusion.* Now, I conceive, it may do it in these following ways:

1. By drawing off the understanding from fixing its contemplation upon a disgusted offensive truth. For though it is not in the power of the will, when the understanding apprehends a truth clearly and distinctly, to countermand its assent to it; yet it has so great an influence upon it, that it is able antecedently to hinder it from taking that truth into a full and thorough consideration. And while the mind is not taken up with an actual attention to the truth proposed to it, so long it is obnoxious to the offers and impressions of the contrary error. For the first *adherencies*, or rather *applications* of the soul to truth, are very weak and imperfect, till they are furthered and confirmed by a frequent converse with it, and so, by degrees, come to have the general notions of reason endear'd and made familiar to the mind, by renewed acts of attention and speculation; which ceasing, if a falsehood comes recommended to the soul with any advantage, that is to say, with *agreeableness*, though without *argument*, it

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is ten to one but it enters and takes possession : And then the poison is infused, let the man get it out again as he can. He who will not insist attentively and closely upon the examination of any truth, is never like to have his mind either clearly informed of it, or firmly united to it. For want of search is really and properly the keeping off the due approximation of the object, without which, a true apprehension of it is impossible. So that if a man has corrupt affections, averse to the purity and excellency of any truth, it is not imaginable, that they will suffer his thoughts to dwell long upon it, but will do their utmost to divert and carry them off to some other object, which he is more inclined to, and enamoured with ; and then, what wonder is it, if under such circumstances the mind is betrayed by the byass of the affections and so lies open to all the treacherous inroads of fallacy and imposture ? As for instance, he whose corrupt nature is impatient of any restraint from morality or religion, will be sure to keep his mind off from them, as much as possibly he can ; he will not trouble himself with any debates or discourses about the truth or evidence of such things as he heartily wishes were neither *evident* nor true. In a word, he will not venture his meditations upon so unwelcome, and so afflicting a subject : And thus having rid himself

self of such notions, the contrary documents of Atheism and immorality still bringing with them a compliance with those affections which all thoughts of religion were so grievous to, will soon find an easy, unresisted admittance into an understanding naked, and unguarded against the several arts and stratagems of the *grand deceiver*. A man indeed may be sometimes so surprized, as not to be able to prevent the first *apprehension* and sight of a truth; but he is always able to prevent the *consideration* of it; without which, the other can work upon him very little. For though apprehension shews the *object*, it must be consideration which *applies it*. But again,

2. A will vitiated, and grown out of love with the truth, *disposes the understanding to error and delusion*, by causing in it a prejudice and partiality in all its reflections upon, and discourses about it. He, who considers of a thing with prejudice, has judged the cause before he hears it, and decided the matter, not as really it is, but as it either crosses or comports with the principles, which he is already prepossessed with: The understanding, in such a case, being like the eye of the body, viewing a white thing through a red glass; it forms a judgment of the colour, not according to the *thing* it sees, but according to that *by which* it
sees.

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fees. And upon the like account it is, that the will and the affections never pitch upon any thing as *odious*, but that sooner or later they bribe the judgment to represent it to them as *ugly* too. We know the miracles, the astonishing works, and excellent discourses of our Saviour could not strike the hearts of those whom he preached to, through the mighty prejudice they had conceived against his *person* and *country*. But that they still opposed all, even the most cogent and demonstrative arguments he could bring for his doctrine, with that silly exception, *Is not this the carpenter's son?* And that one ridiculous proverb, *that no good could come out of Galilee*, (as slight as it was) yet proved strong enough to obstruct their assent, and arm their minds against that high conviction and mighty sway of evidence, which shined forth in all his miraculous works: So that this senseless saying alone fully *answered*, or (which was as effectual for their purpose) absolutely *overbore* them all. In like manner, we find it elsewhere observed by our Saviour himself, of that selfish, rotten, and yet demure generation of men, the *Pharisees*; *that they could not believe, because they received honour one of another*, John v. 44. They had (it seems) bewitched the people into an extravagant esteem and veneration of their sanctity, and by that means had got no small command
over

over their purses, their tables, and their families; nay, and more than ordinary footing and interest in the *Jewish* court itself. So that they ruled without controul, getting the *highest seats in synagogues*, that is, in their chief assemblies or consistories; and they loved also to *feed as high as they sate*, still providing themselves with the *best rooms*, and not the *worst dishes* (we may be sure) *at feasts*. Nor would ever such pretenders *have fasted twice a week*, but that they knew it afforded them *five days besides to feast in*; so that having thus found the sweets of a crafty, long-practised hypocrisy, from which they had reaped so many luscious privileges, they could not but have an horrible prejudice against the strictness of that doctrine, which preached nothing but self-denial, humility, and a contempt of the honours and emoluments of the world, which they themselves so passionately doted upon; and therefore no wonder, if they threw it off as a fable, and an imposture, though recommended with all the attestations of divine power, which had in them a fitness to inform or convince the reason of man. So far did the corruption of their will advance their *prejudice*, and their prejudice destroy their *Judgment*. But,

3. The third and last reason which I shall assign for proving, *that the will's not embracing*

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the love of the truth, betrays the understanding to error and delusion, is from the peculiar malignity which is in every vice, or corrupt affection, to darken and besot the mind, the N^o 8, the great guide and superintendant of all the faculties of the soul; for so near a connection, or rather cognation is there between the moral and intellectual perfection of it, * (as I have elsewhere observ'd) that a great flaw in the former, never fails in the issue to effect the latter; though possibly how this is done, is not so easily accounted for. Nevertheless, that irrefragable argument *experience* sufficiently proves many things to be so, which it is not able to explain, nor indeed pretends to. *Aristotle* has observed of the *vices of the flesh*, (and his observation is in a great degree true of all other) that they do peculiarly cloud the intellect, and debase a man's notions, emasculate his reason, and weaken his discourse; and in a word, make him upon all these accounts, much less a man than he was before. And for this cause, no doubt, has the same author declared young men, in whom the fore-mentioned sort of vices is commonly most predominant, *not competent auditors of moral philosophy*, as having turned the force of their minds to things of a

* The reader may please to cast his eye upon the second sermon of the 3d volume, where this subject is more professedly and largely treated of.

quite contrary nature. But this mischief reaches much farther; for sure it is, that when *wise* men (be their years what they will) become *vicious* men, their wisdom leaves them; and there appears not that keenness and briskness in their apprehensive and judging faculties, which had been all along observed in them, while attended with temperance, and guarded with sobriety. So that, upon this fatal change, they do not argue with that strength, distinguish with that clearness; nor in any matter brought into debate, conclude with that happiness and firmness of result, which they were wont to do.

Shew me so much as one wise counsel, or action of *Marcus Antonius*, a person otherwise both valiant and eloquent, after that he had subdued his understanding to his affections, and his affections to *Cleopatra*. How great was *Lucullus* in the *field*, and how great in the *academy*? But abandoning himself to ease and luxury, *Plutarch* tells us, that he survived the use of his reason, grew infatuated, and doted long before he died, though he died before he was old.

All which tends to demonstrate, that such is the nature of vice, that the love thereof entring into the will, and thrusting out the love of truth, it is no wonder, if the understanding comes to sink into infatuation and delusion;
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the ferment of a vicious inclination lodged in the affections, being like an intoxicating liquor received into the stomach, from whence it will be continually sending thick clouds, and noisome steams up to the brain. Filth and foulness in the one will be sure to cause darkness in the other. Was ever any one almost observed to come out of a tavern, an alehouse, or a jolly meeting, fit for his *study*, or indeed for any thing else, requiring stress, or exactness of thought? The *morning*, we know, is commonly said to be a friend to the *musés*, but a *morning's draught was never so*. And thus having done with the third particular proposed from the text, come we now to the

IV. *Viz.* To shew, *how God can be properly said to send men delusions.* God (says the Apostle, 1 *Joh.* i. 5.) *is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.* And that which in no respect is in him, cannot, we may be sure, proceed from him. Upon which account, it must needs be very difficult to shew and demonstrate, how God can derive ignorance, darkness and deception into the minds of men. And the great difficulty of giving a rational and good account of this, and such-like instances, drove *Manes*, an early heretick, with his followers, (called all along the *Manichees*, or *Manicheans*) to assert

two first, eternal, independent beings, one the cause of all *good*, the other the cause of *all evil*; as concluding, that the evil which is in the world must needs have some cause, and that a being infinitely good could not be the cause of it; and consequently, that there must be some other principle from the malignity of whose influence flowed all the ignorance, all the wickedness and villany, which either is, or ever was in the world. But the generally received opinion of the nature of evil, *viz.* That it is but a mere privation of good, and consequently needs not an *efficient*, but only a *deficient* cause, as owing its production and rise not to the force, but to the failure of the agent; this consideration, I say, has render'd that notion of *Manes* of a first independent principle of evil, as useless and impious in *divinity*, as it is absurd in *philosophy*.

This principle therefore being thus removed, let us see how it can comport with the goodness, and absolute purity of the divine nature, to have such effects ascribed to it, and how, without any derogation to the glorious attribute of God's holiness, he can be said to send the *delusions*, mentioned in the text, into the minds of men. Now, I conceive, he may be said to do it these four ways :

I. First

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I. First by withdrawing his enlightening influence from the understanding. This, I confess, may seem at first an obscure, enthusiastick notion to some; but give me leave to shew, that there is sufficient ground for it in reason. And for this purpose, I shall observe to you, that it was the opinion of some *Philosophers*, particularly of *Aristotle*, and since him of *Averroes*, *Avicenna*, and some others, that there was one *universal soul* belonging to the whole species, or race of mankind, and indeed to all things else according to their capacity: Which universal soul, by its respective existence in, and communication of itself to each particular man, did exert in him those noble acts of understanding, and ratiocination, proper to his nature; and those also in a different degree and measure of perfection, according as the different crasis or disposition of the organs of the body made it more or less fit to receive the communication of that *universal soul*; which soul only (by the way) they held to be immortal; and that every particular man, both in respect of *body* and *spirit*, was mortal: His *spirit* being nothing else but a more refined disposition and elevation of *matter*.

Others detesting the impiety of this opinion, did allow to every individual person a distinct immortal soul, and that also endued with the

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power and faculty of understanding and discourse inherent in it. But then, as to the soul's use, and actual exercise of this faculty; upon their observing the great difference between the same object, as it was *sensible*, and affected the sense, and as it was *intelligible*, and moved the understanding, they held also the necessity of another principle without the soul, to advance the object, *a gradu sensibili ad gradum intelligibilem*, (as they speak) and so to make it actually fit to move and affect the intellect. And this they called an *intellectus agens*; so that although the soul was naturally endued with an intellectual power; yet, by reason of the great distance of material, corporeal things from the spiritual nature of it, it could never actually apprehend them, till this *intellectus agens* did irradiate and shine upon them, and so prepare and qualify them for an *intellectual* perception. And this *intellectus agens*, some, and those none of the lowest form in the *peripatetick* school, have affirmed to be no other than God himself, *that great light which enlightens not only every man, but every thing* (according to its proportion) *in the world*.

The result and application of which discourse to my present purpose is this; that certainly * those great masters of argument and know-

* For it is ascribed to no less persons than to *Plato*, and *Aristotle* after

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knowledge could not but have seen some weighty and considerable reasons thus to interest an external principle in the intellectual operations of man's mind. And so much of reason, do

after him, (as borrowing it from him) and that by several of the most eminent interpreters of the latter, both ancient and modern; all of them proceeding upon this ground, that in order to the actual intellection of any object, there is a spiritual intellectual light necessary to enable the object to move, or affect the intellective faculty, which yet the object cannot give to itself, nor yet strike or move the said faculty without it. And therefore they say, that there is required an *intellectus agens*, or being distinct both from the object and the faculty too, which may so advance and spiritualize the object, by casting an higher light upon it, as to render it fit, and prepared thereby for an intellectual perception. And forasmuch as every thing which is such or such *secondarily*, and by *participation* from another, supposes some other to be so *primarily*, and *originally by and from itself*; and since God is the *primum intelligibile* in the intellectual world, as the sun is the *primum visibile* in the sensible and material world; they affirm the same necessity of a superior and intellectual light issuing from God, in order to move the intellect, and form in it an intellectual apprehension of things, which there is of a light beaming from the sun, for the causing an act of vision in the visive faculty. And this they insist upon, not only as a similitude for illustration, but as a kind of parallel case, as to this particular instance, how widely soever the things compared may differ from one another upon many other accounts. This, I say, was held by several of the most noted of the *Peripatetick* tribe; though others, I know, who are professedly of the same, do yet in this matter go quite another way; allowing indeed, that there is, and must be an *intellectus agens*, but that it is no more than a different *faculty* of the same soul, or a different *function* of the same faculty; but by no means an agent, or intelligent being distinct from it. This, I confess, is of very nice speculation, and made so by the arguments producible on both sides, and consequently not so proper to make a part in such a popular discourse as I am here engaged in; nor should I have ever mentioned it barely as a *Philosophical point*, but as I conceived it improvable into a *theological use*, as I have endeavoured to improve it in the *discourse* itself; to which therefore, I have chose rather to annex this by way of *annotation*, than to insert it into the body thereof.

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I, for my part, reckon to be at the bottom of this opinion, that I have been often induced to think, that if we should but strip things of mere words and terms, and reduce notions to realities, there would be found but little difference (so far as it respects man's understanding) between the *intellectus agens* asserted by some Philosophers, and the *universal grace, or common assistances of the Spirit*, asserted by some divines; (and particularly by *John Goodwin*, calling it, *the Pagan's debt and dowry*) and that the assertors of both of them seem to found their several assertions upon much the same ground; namely, upon their apprehension of the *natural impotence* of the soul of man, immersed in *matter*, to raise itself to such spiritual and sublime operations, as we find it does, without the assistance of some higher and divine principle. And accordingly, this being admitted, that the soul is no otherwise able to exert its intellectual acts, than by a light continually flowing in upon it, from the great fountain of light, (whether that light assists it by strengthening the faculty itself, or brightening the object, or both, it matters not, since the result of both, as to the main issue of the action, will be the same.) I say, this being admitted, that God beams this light into man's understanding, and that, as a free agent, by voluntary communications; so
that

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that he may withdraw or suspend what he thus communicates, as he pleases; how natural, how agreeable to reason is it to conceive, that God being provoked by gross sins, may deliver the sinner to *delusion* and infatuation, by a suspension and subtraction of this light? For may not God blast the understanding of such an one, by shutting up those influences, which were wont to enliven his reason in all its discourses and argumentations. Certain it is, that this frequently happens; and that the wit and parts of men, *who hold the truth in unrighteousness*, are often blasted, so that there is a visible decay of them, a strange unusual weakness and failure in them; and this not to be ascribed to any known cause in the world, but to the just judgment of God, stopping that eternal fountain from which they had received their continual supplies. This to me seems very intelligible, and equally rational: And accordingly may pass for the first way, by which God may be said to *send delusion* into the minds of men. But,

2. God may be said to do the same, by giving commission to the great deceiver, and spirit of falsehood to abuse and seduce the sinner. A signal and most remarkable example of which, we have in 1 *Kings* xxxii. 22. when *Ahab* was grown full ripe for destruction, we find this ex-

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pedient for his ruin pitched upon; viz. *That he was to be persuaded to go up to Ramoth Gilead, to fall there.* But how, and by what means was this to be effected? Why, the text tells us, *That there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And God said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also; go forth, and do so.* We see here the evil spirit sent forth, and fully empowered by Almighty God to accomplish his delusions upon a bold, incorrigible sinner. And what method God took then, we cannot deny, or prove it unreasonable, but that he may take still; where the same sins prepare and fit men for the same perdition.

How the devil conveys his fallacies to the minds of men, and by what ways and arts he befools their understandings, I shall not here dispute; nor, being sure of the thing itself, from the word of God, *that it is so*, shall I be much solicitous about the *manner how*. But thus much we may truly, and, by consequence, safely say, that since it is too evident, that the devil can make false resemblances and representations of things pass before our bodily eyes; so that we shall be induced to believe, that we see that, which physically, and indeed, we do

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not see : Why may he not also suggest false images of things, both to the imagination, and to the intellectual eye of the mind, (as different as they are from one another) and so falsify our notions, and disorder our apprehensions ? It is plainly asserted in 2 Cor. iv. 4. *That the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not.* The great sophister, and prince of darkness, (God permitting him) can strangely blindfold our reason, and muffle our understanding ; and, no doubt, the chiefest cause, that most of the obstinate, besotted sinners of the world are not sensible, that the devil blinds and abuses them, is, that he has indeed actually done so already.

For, how dreadfully did God consign over the Heathen world to a perpetual slavery to his deceits ? They worshipped him, they consulted with him, and so absolutely were they sealed up under the ruling cheat, that they took all his tricks and impostures for *oracle* and *instruction*. And the truth is, when men, under the powerful preaching of the gospel, (such as the church of *England* has constantly afforded) will grow Heathens in the viciousness of their practices, it is but just with God, to suffer them (by a very natural transition) to grow Heathens too in the grossness of their delusions.

3. A third way, by which God may be said *to send men delusions*, is by a providential disposing of them into such circumstances of life, as, through a peculiar suitableness to their corruption, have in them a strange efficacy to delude and impose upon them. God, by a secret, unobserved trace of his providence, may cast men under an heterodox, seducing ministry, or he may order their business and affairs so, that they shall light into atheistical company, grow acquainted with hereticks, or possibly meet with pestilent books, and with arguments subtilly and speciously urged against the truth; all which falling in with an ill-inclined judgment, and worse-order'd morals, will wonderfully recommend and set off the very worst of errors to a mind thus prepared for their admission: No guard being sufficient to hinder their entering, and taking possession, but where caution and virtue keep *the door*. The want of which quality has been the grand, if not sole cause, which in all ages has brought so many over to, and in the issue settled and confirmed them in some of the foulest sects, and absurdest heresies, that ever infested the Christian church; and so deeply have the wretches drank in the delusion, that they have lived and died in it, and transmitted the surviving poison of it to posterity. And yet, as far and wide as such heresies have reigned

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reigned and raged in their time, and as woful an havock as they have made of souls, they have been often taken up at first by mere accident, or upon some slight, trivial, unprojected occasion; no less unperceivable in their rise, than afterward formidable in their progress. But, as what is said of *affliction*, in *Job* v. 6. may with equal truth and pertinence be said of every *notable event*, *bad* as well as *good*, namely, *that it comes not out of the dust*; so the direction of all such small, and almost undiscernible causes to such mighty effects, as often follow from them, can proceed from nothing, but that all comprehending providence, which casts its superintending eye, and governing influence over all, even the most minute and inconsiderable passages in the world; inconsiderable indeed in themselves, but in their consequences by no means so.

And therefore, as we find it expressed of him who kills a man unwillingly, and by some undesigned stroke or accident, *that God delivers that man into his hands*, *Exod.* xxi. 12. so when a man, by such odd, unforeseen ways and means, as we have before mentioned, comes to be drawn into any false, erroneous belief or persuasion, it may, with as true and solid consequence, be affirmed, that by all this *God sends such a man a delusion*. As for instance, when by the special disposal of God's providence, *Hushai the Archite*
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suggested that counsel to Absalom, in 2 Sam. xvii.
 11, 12, which he believed, and followed to
 his destruction ; we may say, and that neither
 improperly, nor untruly, that God sent him
 that deception ; for it is expressly added in the
 14th verse, *That God had appointed to defeat the*
counsel of Achitophel, to the intent that he might
bring evil upon Absalom. Likewise how em-
 phatically, full and pregnant to the same pur-
 pose is that instance of a false prophet accus-
 tomed to deceive himself and others, in *Ezek. xiv.*
 9. *If the Prophet, says God, be deceived when*
he has spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived
that Prophet. God here names and appropri-
 ates the action to himself, by a way of proceed-
 ing incomprehensible indeed, but unquestion-
 ably just.

Let this therefore pass for a third way, by
 which God delivers over a sinner to error and
 circumvention. Which point I shall conclude
 with those exclamatory words of St. Paul, so
 full of wonder and astonishment in *Rom. xi. 33.*
How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways
past finding out ! So many windings and turn-
 ings, so many untraceable meanders are there
 in the providence of God, to carry on the *de-*
lusion of those sinners who have been first so fe-
 dulous and industrious to *delude* themselves. In
 all which passages, nevertheless, (how unac-
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countable soever they may be to us) still the *delusion* is in him alone, who embraces it, a sin; but in God *who sends it*, undoubtedly a *judgment only*, and a very righteous one too. And now in the

4. And last place: We are not to omit another notable way of *God's delivering sinners to delusion*; which is mentioned in the 9th verse of the chapter from whence our text is taken, namely, his permitting *lying wonders* to be done before them. A miracle in a large and general sense is no more, but *Effectus aliquis manifestus, cujus causa ignoratur*; a manifest effect, of which the cause is not understood: But in a more restrained and proper sense, it is defined a work or effect evident to *sense*, and exceeding the force of *natural agents*. Now, whether such an one can be done to confirm and give credit to a falsehood proposed to mens belief; God lending his power for the trial of men, to see, or rather to let the world see, whether they will be drawn off from the truth or no, may well be disputed; though that place in *Deut. xiii. 1, 2.* seems shrewdly to make for the affirmative.

But as for that former sort of miracles, which indeed are only *strange things causing wonder*, and so may proceed from mere natural causes applying *activa passivis*, there is no question, but such as these may be done to confirm a
false

false doctrine or assertion. Thus when *Pharaoh* harden'd his heart against the express command, and declared will of God, God permitted him to be confirmed in his delusion, by the enchantments and lying wonders of the *Magicians*; all which were done only by the power of the *devil*. Forasmuch as Angels, both good and bad, having a full insight into the activity and force of natural causes, by new and strange conjunctions of the active qualities of some, with the passive capacities of others, can produce such wonderful effects, as shall generally amaze and astonish poor mortals, whose shorter sight is not able to reach into the causes of them.

The church of *Rome* has (in this respect) sufficiently declared the little value she has for the old *Christian truth*, by the *new upstart* articles she has superadded to it; and, besides this, to confirm one error with another, she farther professes a *power of doing miracles*. So that, laying aside the writings of the Apostles, we must, it seems, resolve our faith *into legends*; and *old wives fables* must take place of the histories of the Evangelists. And the truth is, if *nonsense* may pass *for miracle*, *transubstantiation* has carried her miracle-working gift far above all the miracles that were ever yet wrought in the world. But as for the many other miraculous
feats

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feats which she and her sons pretend to, and boast of, I shall only say thus much of them; that though I doubt not, but most of them are the impudent cheats of daring, designing persons, set a foot and practised by them, to defy God, as well as to delude men; yet it is no ways improbable, but that God may suffer the devil to do many of them above what a bare human power is able to do, and that in a *judicial* and *penal* way; thereby to fix and rivet both the *deceivers* and *deceived* in a belief of those lyes and fopperies, which, in opposition to the *light* of *reason* and *conscience*, they had so industriously enslaved their understandings to.

And now, I think, it is of as high concernment to every man, as the salvation of his soul ought to be, to reflect with dread upon these severe and fearful methods of divine justice. We, through an infinite and peculiar mercy have yet the *truth* set before us; the pure, unmixed truth of the gospel, with great *light* and *power* held forth to us. But if we shall now obstinately shut our eyes against it, stave it off, and bolt it out of our consciences, and all this only from a secret love to some base minion lust or corruption, which that *truth* would mortify, and root out of our hearts; let us remember, that this is the very height of divine vengeance;

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that those, who *love a lye*, should be brought at length to *believe it*, and (as a natural consequent of both) *to perish by it too*.

Which God, the great fountain of truth, and Father of lights, of his infinite compassion prevent. To whom be rendered and ascribed, (as is most due) all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

ILL-DISPOSED
AFFECTIONS,

Both naturally and penally

THE

Cause of Darknefs

AND

Error in the Judgment.

PART II.

SERMON IX.

Ill-disposed *Affections*, both naturally and penally the Cause of Darkneſs and Error in the *Judgment*.

2 THESS. ii. 11.

And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye.

WHEN I firſt made an entrance upon theſe words, I gathered the full ſenſe and deſign of them (as I judged) into this one propoſition, *viz.*

That the not entertaining a ſincere love and affection for the *duties* of religion, naturally, and by the juſt judgment of God alſo, diſpoſes

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men to error and deceptions about the great
truths of religion.

Which to me seeming to take in, and comprehend the full sense and drift of the words, I then cast what I had to say upon them into these following particulars.

I. To shew, *how the mind of man can believe a lye.*

II. To shew, *what it is to receive the love of the truth.*

III. To shew, *how the not receiving the love of the truth, comes to have such a malign influence upon the understanding, as to dispose it to error and delusion.*

IV. To shew, *how God can be properly said to send men delusions.* And,

V. Since his sending them is here mentioned as a *judgment*, (and a very severe one too) the next thing I propose is to shew *wherein the extraordinary greatness of it did consist.* And,

VI. And *lastly*, To improve the point into some useful consequences and deductions from the whole.

The

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The *four* first of these I have already dispatched in the preceding discourse upon this text and subject; and so shall now proceed to the

V. Which was to shew, *wherein the extraordinary and distinguishing greatness of this judgment did consist.* For it is certain, that the text here accounts and represents it above the ordinary rate of judgments commonly sent by God.

And this, I conceive, will remarkably shew itself to such, as shall consider it these two ways:

1. Absolutely in itself.
2. In the consequents of it.

Under the first of which two considerations, the peculiar dreadfulnes of this judgment will more than sufficiently appear, upon these two accounts: As,

(1.) That it is *spiritual*; and so directly affects and annoys the prime and most commanding part of man's nature, *his soul*; that noble copy and resemblance of its Maker, in *small* indeed, but nevertheless one of the *liveliest* representations of him, that the God of nature ever drew; and that in some of his greatest and most amiable perfections. And if so, can any thing be imagined to come so like a killing *blast* upon it, as that which shall at once strip it of this glorious image, and stamp the black portraiture of the foulest of beings in the room of

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it? Besides, since nothing can either *please* or *afflict* to any considerable degree, but by a close and intimate application of itself to a subject capable of such impressions, still it must be the *spirituality of a judgment*, which entering where *body* and *matter* cannot, is the only thing that can strike a man in his principal capacity of being miserable; and consequently in that part which enables him (next to the Angels themselves) to receive and drink in more of the *wrath*, as well as *love of God*, than any other being whatsoever. In a spiritual, uncompounded nature, the capacities of pain and pleasure must needs be equal; though in a corporeal, or compounded one, the sense of *pain* is much acuter, and goes deeper than that of pleasure is ever found to do. Accordingly, as to what concerns the soul or *spirit*, no doubt, our chief *passive*, as well as *active* strengths are lodged in that; though it being an object too *near us* to be perfectly apprehended *by us*, we are not able in this life to know distinctly what a *spirit* is, and what it can bear, and what it cannot. But our great Creator, who exactly *knows our frame*, and had the first ordering of the whole machine, knows also *where*, and *by what a soul or spirit* may be most sensibly *touched* and *wounded*, better a great deal than we, who are animated and acted by that soul, do or can. And therefore,

Ser. fore, his w tual wher that, smite we r tion, ing v wher or in his l life; cent men his r E less cept it se frail und exp or r ving com and hea kee

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fore, where he designs the severest strokes of his wrath, we may be sure, that it is this *spiritual part* of us which must be the great scene, where such tragical things are to be acted. So that, if an angry providence should at any time smite a sinner in his nearest temporal concerns, we may, nevertheless, look upon such an infliction, how sharp soever, but as a drop of scalding water lighting upon his hand or foot; but when God fastens the judgment upon the spirit or inner man, it is like scalding lead poured into his bowels, it reaches him in the very center of life; and where the center of life is made the center of misery too, they must needs be commensurate, and a man can no more shake off his misery, than he can himself.

Every judgment of God has a force more or less destructive, according to the quality and reception of the thing which it falls upon. If it seizes the body, which is but of a mortal and frail make, and so (as it were) crumbles away under the pressure, why then the judgment itself expires through the failure of a sufficient subject or recipient, and ceases to be predatory, as having nothing to prey upon. But that which comes out of its Creator's hands, immaterial and immortal, endures and continues under the heaviest stroke of his wrath; and so is able to keep pace with the infliction (as I may so ex-

press it) both by the largeness of its perception, and the measure of its duration. He, who has a soul to suffer in, has something by which God may take full hold of him, and upon which he may exert his anger to the utmost. Whereas, if he levels the blow at that which is weak and mortal, the very weakness of the thing *stricken* at, will elude the violence of the *stroke*: As when a sharp, corroding rheum falls upon the lungs; that part being but of a spongy nature, and of no hard substance, little or no pain is caused by the distillation, but the same falling upon a nerve fastened to the jaw, or to a joint, (the consistency and firmness of which shall give force to the impression) it presently causes the quickest pain and anguish, and becomes intolerable. A cannon bullet will do terrible execution upon a *castle-wall*, or a rampart, but none at all upon a *woolpack*.

The judgments, which God inflicts upon men, are of several sorts, and intended for several ends, and those very different. Some are only *probative*, and designed to *try* and stir up those virtues, which before lay dormant in the soul. Some again are *preventive*, and sent to pull back the unwary sinner from the unperceived snares of death, which he is ignorantly approaching to. And some, in the last place, are of a *punitive* or *vindictive* nature, and intended

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only to recompense or revenge the guilt of past sins; as part of the sinner's payment in hand, and as so many *fore-tastes* of death, and *earnests* of damnation.

Accordingly, we are to observe, that the malignity of *spiritual judgments* consists chiefly in this, That *their end*, most commonly, is neither *trial* nor *prevention*, but *vengeance* and *retribution*. They are *corrosives*, made not to *heal*, but to *consume*: And surely, such an one is the judgment of being *sealed up under a delusion*. *Sampson*, we read, endured many hardships and affronts, and yet sunk under none of them; but when an universal sottishness was fallen upon all his faculties, and God's wonted presence had forsook him, he presently became, as to all the generous purposes of life and action, an useless and a ruined person.

Whereas, on the other side, suppose, that God should visit a man with extreme poverty; yet still, he, who is *as poor as Job*, may be as *humble*, as *patient*, and as *pious* as *Job* too; and such qualities will be always accounted *pearls* and *treasures*, though found upon the vilest *dunghill*: Or, what if God should dash a man's name and reputation, and make him a scorn and a by-word to all who know him; yet *still the shame of the cross* was greater, and one may be made the way and passage *to a crown*,

as well as the other? It was so, we are assured, to our great *spiritual head*; and why may it not, in its proportion, prove the same likewise to his *spiritual members*? For the conjunction between them is intimate, and the inference natural. Or what again, if God should think fit to smite a man with sores, sickness, and noisome ulcers in his body? yet even these, as offensive as they are, cannot unqualify a *Lazarus* for *Abraham's bosom*. And so for all other sorts of calamities incident to this mortal state; should we ransack all the magazines of God's temporal judgments, not one of them all, nor yet all of them together, can reach a man in that, which alone can render him truly happy or miserable. For *though the mountains* (as the *Psalmist* expresses it) *should be carried into the sea*, and the whole world about him should be in a flame, yet still (as *Solomon* says) *a wise and a good man shall be satisfied from himself*; his happiness is in his own keeping; he has it at home, and therefore needs not seek for it abroad. But,

(2.) The greatness of the judgment of being brought under the power of a *delusion*, consists not only in the *spirituality* of it, whereby it possesses and perverts the whole soul in all the powers and offices of it, but more particularly, that it blasts a man in that peculiar, topping perfection of his nature, *his understanding*: For
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ignorance and deception are the very bane of the intellect, the disease of the mind, and the utmost dishonour of reason : There being no sort of reproach which a man resents with so keen, and so just an indignation, as the charge of folly. The very word *fool* draws blood, and nothing but death is thought an equivalent to the slander : Forasmuch as it carries in it an insulting negative upon that, which constitutes the person so charged properly a man ; every degree of ignorance being so far a recess and degradation from rationality, and consequently from humanity itself. Nor is this any modern fancy or caprice lately taken up, but the constant and unanimous consent of all nations and ages. For what else do we think could make the heathen Philosophers so infinitely laborious, and, even to a miracle, industrious in the quest of knowledge ? What was it, that engrossed their time, and made them think neither day nor night, nor both of them together, sufficient for study ? But because they reckoned it a base, and a mean thing to be deceived, to be put off with fallacy and *appearance* instead of truth and reality, and overlooking the substance and inside of things, to take up with mere shadow and surface. It was a known saying of the ancients, ἀπὸ σώματος νόσον, ἀπὸ ψυχῆς ἀμάθειαν. Keep off ignorance from thy soul, as thou wouldst

wouldest a disease or a plague from thy body. For when a man is cursed with a blind, and a besotted mind, it is a *sure*, and therefore a *sad* sign, that God is leading such an one to his final doom; it is both the cause and the fore-runner of his destruction. For when the *malefactor* comes once to have *his eyes covered*, it shews, that he is not far from *his execution*. In a word, he who has sunk so far below himself, as to have debased the governing faculties of his soul, and given up his assent to an imperious, domineering error, is fit for nothing but to be *trumped* and *trampled* upon, to be led by the nose, and enslaved to the designs of every bold encroacher, either upon his interest, or his reason. And such, he may be sure, he shall not fail to meet with; especially, if his lot casts him upon a country abounding with publick, countenanced, religious cheats, both natives and foreigners, broachers of heresies, leaders of sects, tools and under-agents to our *Romish* back-friends, who can willingly enough allow them all *conventicles* for the only proper places to *serve God in*, and the church (if need be) to *serve a turn by*; of which, and the like impostors, it may be truly said, with reference to their abused proselytes, that they wear and carry the trophies of so many captivated reasons about them; that they cloath themselves with the spoil of their

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their wretched intellectuals, and so, in effect, tread the very *heads of their disciples under their feet*. This is the treatment which they are sure to find from such sanctified deceivers; these the returns, which *delusion*, submitted to, still rewards her votaries with. And may God, I beseech him, in his just judgment order matters so, that such practices and such rewards may inseparably accompany and join one another, not only by an *occasional*, but by a fixed and *perpetual communion*.

In the mean time, if *slavery* be that, which all generous and brave spirits abhor; and to lose the choicest of *nature's freeholds*, and that in the most valuable of things, *their reason*, be the worst of *slaveries*; then surely it must be the most inglorious condition that can befall a rational creature, to be possessed, rid, and governed by a *delusion*. For still (as our Saviour has told us in *John* viii. 32.) *it is the truth which must make us free*; the truth only, which must give a man the enjoyment, the government, and the very possession of himself. In a word, truth has set up her tribunal in the soul, and sitting there as judge herself, there can be no exception against her *sentence*, nor appeal from her *authority*.

But besides all this, there is yet something farther, which adds to the misery of this kind
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of slavery and captivity of the *mind* under error; and that is, that it has a peculiar malignity to bind the shackles faster upon it, by a strange, unaccountable love, which it begets of itself, in a man's affections. For no man entertains an error, but, for the time that he does so, he is highly pleased and enamoured with it, and has a more particular tenderneſs and fondneſs for a falſe notion, than for a true; (as ſome for a baſtard, more than for a ſon) for error and deception by all, who are not actually under them, are accounted really the madneſs of the mind. And *madneſs*, it muſt be owned, naturally keeps off *melancholy*, though often *cauſed by it*. For it makes men wonderfully pleaſed with their own extravagancies; and few, how much ſoever *out of their wits*, are *out of humour* too in *Bedlam*.

Now the reaſon of this different acceptableneſs of *truth* and *error* in the firſt offers of them to the mind, and the advantage which the latter too often gets over the former, is, I conceive, from this, that it is natural for error to paint and daub, to trim, and uſe more of art and dreſs to ſet it off to the mind, than truth is obſerved to do. Which, truſting in its own native and ſubſtantial worth, ſcorns all meretricious ornaments, and knowing the right it has to our aſſent, and the indiſputable claim to all that is called

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called *reason*, she thinks it below her to ask that upon courtesy, in which she can plead a property; and therefore, rather enters than insinuates, and *challenges possession* instead of *begging admission*. Which being the case, no wonder if error, oiled with obsequiousness, (which generally gains friends, though it deserves none worth having) has often the advantage of truth, and thereby slides more easily and intimately into the fool's bosom, than the uncourtliness of truth will suffer it to do. But then again, we are to observe withal, that there is nothing which the mind of man has a vehement and passionate love for, but it is so far enslaved, and brought into bondage to that thing. And if so; can there be a greater calamity, than for so noble a being as the soul is, to love and court the dictates of a commanding absurdity? Nothing certainly being so tyrannical as ignorance, where time, and long possession enables it to *prescribe*; nor so haughty and assuming, where pride and self-conceit bids it set up *for infallible*.

But now, to close this point, by shewing, how vastly the understanding differs from itself, when informed by truth, and when abused by error: Let us observe, how the scripture words the case, while it expresses the former by a *state of light*, and the latter by a *state of darkness*. Concerning both which, as it is evident, that

nothing can be more amiable, suitable, and universally subservient both to the needs, and to the refreshments of the creature, than light: So nothing is deservedly accounted so dismal, hateful, and dispiriting, as *darkness is; darkness*, I say, which the scripture makes only another word *for the shadow of death*; and always the grand opportunity of mischief, and the surest shelter of deformity. For though to want eyes be indeed a great calamity, yet to *have eyes and not to see*, to have all the *instruments of sight, and the curse of blindness* together, this is the very height and crisis of misery, and adds a sting and a reproach to what would otherwise be but a misfortune. For nothing envenoms any calamity, but the crime which deserves it.

I come now to consider the distinguishing greatness of the judgment of God's sending men *strong delusion*, by taking a view of the effects and consequents of it; and we need cast our eyes no farther than these two. As,

1. That it renders the conscience utterly useless, as to the great office to be discharged by it in the regulation and supervisal of the whole course of a man's life. A blind watchman (all must grant) is equally a nuisance and an impertinence. And such a paradox, both in reason and practice, is a *deluded conscience*, viz. a counsellor who cannot advise, and a guide not able

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to *direct*. Nothing can be more close and proper to the point now before us, than that remark of our Saviour, in *Matth. vi. 23.* *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great must that darkness be?* Why, as great, no doubt, and of as fatal consequence to the affairs and government of the microcosm, or lesser world, as if, in the greater, God should put out the sun, and establish one great, universal cloud in the room of it; or, as if the *moon* and *stars*, instead of governing the night, should be governed by it, and the noble influences of the one should, for usefulness, give place to the damps, and deadning shades of the other. All which would quickly be granted to be monstrous and preposterous things; and yet not more so, than to imagine a man guided by a benighted conscience in the great concerns of eternity; and to have that put out, which God had set up as the sovereign light of the soul, to sit and preside there as the great pilot to steer us in all our choices, and to afford us those standing discriminations of good and evil, by which alone a rational agent can proceed warrantably and safely in all his actions.

As for the *will* and the *affections*, they are made to follow and obey, not to lead, or to direct. Their office is not *apprehension*, but *appetite*; and therefore the schools rightly affirm,
that

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that the will, strictly and precisely considered, is *cæca potentia*, a blind faculty. And therefore, if error has perverted the order, and disturbed the original œconomy of our faculties; and a *blind will* thereupon comes to be led by a *blind understanding*, there is no remedy, but it must trip and stumble, and sometimes fall into the noisom ditch of the foulest enormities and immoralities. But now, whether this be not one of the highest instances of God's vindictive justice, thus to confound a man with an erroneous, deceived conscience, a little reflexion upon the miseries of one in such a condition will easily demonstrate. For see the tumult and anarchy of his mind; having done a good and a lawful action, his conscience alarms him with scruples, with false judgments, and anxious reflexions; and, perhaps, on the other hand, having done an act in itself evil and unlawful, the same conscience excuses and acquits him, and sooths him into such complacencies in his sin, as shall prevent his repentance, and so ascertain his perdition. But now, what shall a deluded person do in this sad dilemma of sin and misery? *For, if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who can prepare himself for the battle?* If it sounds a charge, when it should sound a retreat, how can the soldier direct his course? But, being thus befooled by
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the very methods and means of safety, must of necessity find himself in the jaws of death before he is aware, and betrayed into *his enemy's hands*, without any possibility of help or relief from *his own*. In like manner, where a delusion enters so deep into, and gets such fast hold of the conscience, that it corrupts or justles out the first marks and measures of *lawful* and *unlawful*, and thereby overthrows the standing rules of morality; a man, in such a woful and dark estate, can hardly be accounted in the number of rational agents: For, if he does well, it is by chance, neither by rule nor principle; nor by choice, but by luck; and if, on the contrary, he does ill, yet he is not assured that he does so, being acted, in all that he goes about, by a blind *impetus*, without either *forecast* or *distinction*. Both the good and evil of his actions is brutish and *accidental*, and in the whole course of them he proceeds as if he were *throwing dice for his life*, or at *cross and pile* for his salvation. And this brings me to the other killing consequence, wherein appears the greatness of this judgment of being delivered over to a delusion. And that is,

2. *Final perdition* mention'd by the Apostle, in the verse immediately following the text. God (says he) *shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye; that they all might be*

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damned, who believed not the truth. This is the utmost period, to which delusion brings the sinner, but no less than what was intended by it from the very first. Every error is in the nature of it destructive. I do not say, that it always actually destroys; since the *tendency* of an action is one thing, but the *event* another. For as in the body there is hardly any *sore* or *distemper*, (how curable soever by art or physick) but what in the malignity of its nature, and the utmost improvement of that malignity, tends to the ruin and demolition of the whole constitution: So in the soul there is no considerable error, which at any time infects it, (especially if it disposes to practice) but being suffered to continue and exert its progressive and diffusive quality, will be still spreading its contagion, and by degrees eating into the conscience, till it festers into a kind of spiritual gangrene, and becomes mortal and incurable.

I must confess, I cannot imagine, that those hereticks who err fundamentally, and by consequence damnably, took their first rise, and began to set up with a fundamental error, but grew into it by insensible encroachments, and gradual insinuations, inuring and (as it were) *training up the belief* to lesser essays of falshood, and proceeding from propositions only *suspicious*, to such as were *false*, from *false* to *dangerous*, and
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at length from *dangerous* to downright *destructive*. Hell is a deep place, and there are many steps of descent to the bottom of it; many obscure vaults to be passed through, before we come to *utter darknefs*. But still the way of error is the way to it. And as surely and naturally as the first dusk and gloom of the evening tends to, and at last ends in the thickest darkness of midnight, so every delusion, sinfully cherished and persisted in, (how easily soever it may sit upon the conscience for some time) will, in the issue, lodge the sinner in the deepest hell, and the blackest regions of damnation. And so I come to the

VI. And last thing proposed for the handling of the words; and that was, to draw some useful consequences and deductions from the five foregoing particulars. As,

First of all: Since the *belief of a lye* is here undoubtedly noted for a sin; and since Almighty God in the way of judgment delivers men to it for *not receiving the love of the truth*; it follows, by most clear and undeniable consequence, that it is no ways inconsistent with the Divine Holiness to affirm, that *he may punish one sin with another*. Though the manner, how God does so, is not so generally agreed upon by all. For some here affirm, that sin is

said to be the punishment of sin, because in most sinful actions, the *committer of them* is really a *sufferer in and by* the very sin which he commits. As for instance, the envious man at the same time contracts the guilt, and feels the torment of his sin; the same thing defiles and afflicts too; merits an hell hereafter, and withal anticipates one here. The like may be said of theft, perjury, uncleanness, and intemperance; the infamy, and other calamities inseparably attending them, render them their own scourges, and make the sinner the minister of God's justice in acting a full revenge upon himself. All this, I must confess, is true, but it reaches not the matter in question; which compares not the same sin with itself, whereof the consequences may undoubtedly be afflictive, but compares two distinct sins together, and enquires concerning these, whether one can properly be the punishment of the other?

Besides, if we weigh and distinguish things exactly, when the envious man groans under the gnawings and convulsions of his base sin, and the lewd person suffers the brand and disrepute of his vice; in all this, sin is not properly punished with sin; *but the evil of envy* is punished with *the trouble of envy*, and the *sin* of intemperance with the *infamy* of intemperance; but neither is a state of trouble, nor a state of disgrace

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disgrace or infamy properly a state of sin; these are natural, not moral evils; and opposed to the quiet and tranquillity, not to the virtue of the soul; for a man may be virtuous without either ease or reputation. This way therefore is short of resolving the problem enquired into; which precisely moves upon this point, *viz. Whether for the guilt of one sin God can, by way of penalty, bring the sinner under the guilt of another?*

Some seem to prove, that he cannot, and that in the strength of this argument, that every punishment proceeding from God as the author of it, is *just* and *good*; but no sin is or can be so; and therefore no sin can be made by God the punishment of another.

But nevertheless, the contrary is held forth in scripture, and that as expressly, as words can well declare a thing; for besides the clear proof thereof, which the very text carries with it, it is yet farther proved by those two irrefragable places, in *Rom. i. 24.* The Apostle has these very words, *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness*; and again in the 26th verse, *For this cause God gave them up to vile affections.* Besides several other places pregnant to the same purpose, both in the old testament and the new. From all which it is certain, that God may make one sin the punishment of

another. Though it still is to be remembered, that it is one thing for *God to give a man over to sin*, and quite another *for God to cause him to sin*; the former importing in it no more, than God's providential ordering of a man's circumstances so, that he shall find no check or hindrance in the course of his sin; but the latter implying also a *positive efficiency* towards the commission or *production* of a *sinful act*; which God never does, nor can do; but the other he both may, and, in a *judicial* way, very often does.

To the argument therefore alledged, I answer thus: That it is very consonant both to scripture and reason, to distinguish in one and the same thing several respects; and accordingly in *sin*, we may consider the moral irregularity of it; and so being in the very *nature* of it *evil*, it is impossible that there should be any good in it; or we may consider *sin*, as to the *penal* application of it to the person who committed it, and *as a means* to bring the just judgment of God upon him for what he had done; and so some *good* may be said to *belong to it*, though there be none at all *in it*.

Or to express the same thing otherwise, and perhaps more clearly and agreeably to vulgar apprehensions. *Sin* may be considered either,
1. With reference to the proper cause of it,
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the will of man *committing* or producing it, and so it is absolutely and entirely evil. Or, 2. It may be considered, as it relates to the supreme judge and governor of the world, *permitting, ordering, disposing and over-ruling* the existence and event of it, to the honour of his wisdom and justice; and so far it may be called *good*, and consequently sustain the nature of a punishment proceeding from God. But you will reply, *Can sin be any ways good?* I answer, *That naturally and intrinsically* it cannot, but *extrinsically, accidentally, and occasionally*, as ordered to a subserviency to God's glory, *it may*; and the providence of God is no farther concerned about it: That is to say, it is *good and just*, that God should so order and dispose of an obstinate sinner, (as he did once of *Pharaoh*) that he should, *through his own corruption*, fall into farther sin, in order to his farther punishment: But surely, this does by no means infer, that the sins he thus falls into *are good*, though God's ordering of them may be so; and *darkness* will be *darkness* still, though God can, and often does *bring light out of it*. That the *Jews* having rejected the gospel so powerfully preached to them, should be delivered to hardness of heart, and final impenitence, was *just*, and, by consequence, *good*. But this is far from inferring, that the *hardness of heart and impenitence*

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were so too. Sin may give occasion for a great deal of good to be exercised upon it, and about it, though there be none inherent in it; and upon that account, when any good is ascribed to it, or affirmed of it, it is purely by an *extrinsic denomination*, and no more.

Now these distinctions rightly weighed and applied, will fully and clearly accord the doctrine laid down by us, both with the notions of human reason, and the holiness of the divine nature; and consequently render all objections, and popular exclamations against either of them, empty and insignificant.

Nor indeed is it very difficult, and much less impossible, to give some tolerable account, how God delivers a sinner over to farther sins. For it may be very rationally said, that he does it partly by with-holding his restraining grace, and leaving corrupt nature to itself, to the full swing and freedom of its own extravagant actings. Whereby a man adds *sin* to *sin*, strikes out furiously, and without controul, till he grows obstinate and incurable. And God may be said to do the same also by administering objects and occasions of sin to such or such a sinner, whose corrupt nature will be sure to take fire at them, and so actually to throw itself into all enormities. In all which, God is not at all the author of sin, but only pursues the
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great works, and righteous ends of his providence, in disposing of things, or objects in themselves good or indifferent towards the compassing of the same; howbeit, through the poison of mens vicious affections, they are turned into the opportunities and fuel of sin, and made the occasion of their final destruction.

But now of all the punishments which the great and just God in his anger inflicts, or brings upon a man for sin, there is none comparable to *sin itself*. Men are apt to go on securely, pleasing themselves in the repeated gratifications of their vice; and they feel not God strike, and so are encouraged in the progress of their impiety. But let them not, for all that, be too confident; for God may *strike*, though they feel not *his stroke*, and perhaps the more terribly for their *not feeling it*. Forasmuch as in judgments of this nature, *insensibility* always goes deepest; and the wrath of God seldom does such killing execution, when it *thunders*, as when it *blasts*. He has certainly some dreadful design carrying on against the sinner, while he suffers him to go on in a smooth uninterrupted course of sinning, and what that design is, and the dreadfulfulness of it, probably will not be known to him, till the possibilities of repentance are cut off, and hid from his eyes; at present,

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present, it looks like the suffering a man to perish and die by a lethargy, rather than jog or awaken him. Believe it, it is a sad case, when the sinner shall never perceive, that God is angry with him, till he actually feels the effects of his anger in another *world*, where it can neither be pacified, nor turned away.

2. The second great consequence from the doctrine hitherto treated of by us, of the naturalness of mens going *off from the love of the truth* to a *disbelief of the same*, shall be to inform us of the surest and most effectual way to confirm our faith about the sacred and important truths of religion? and that is, *to love them* for their transcendent worth and purity; to fix our inclinations and affections upon them; and in a word, not only to confess, own, and acknowledge them *to be truths*, but also to be *willing that they should be so*; and to rejoice with the greatest complacency, that there should be such things prepared for us, as the Scripture tells there are. For we shall find, that *truth* is not so much upon terms of *courtesy* with the understanding, (which upon a clear discovery of itself, it naturally commands) as it is with the will and the affections, which (though never so clearly discovered to them) it is almost always forced to *woe*, and make *suit* to.

I have

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I have been ever prone to take this for a principle, and a very safe one too, viz. That there is no opinion really good, (I mean *good* in the natural, beneficent consequences thereof) which can be *false*. And accordingly, when religion, even *natural*, tells us, *That there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of every man according to his works; that he is a most wise governor, and a most just and impartial judge, and for that reason has appointed a future estate, wherein every man shall receive a retribution suitable to what he had done in his life-time.* And moreover, when the Christian religion farther assures us, *That Christ has satisfied God's justice for sin, and purchased eternal redemption and salvation, for even the greatest sinners, who shall repent of, and turn from their sins; and withal, has given such excellent laws to the world, that if men perform them, they shall not fail to reap an eternal reward of happiness, as the fruit and effect of the aforementioned satisfaction; as on the other side, that if they live viciously, and die impenitent, they shall inevitably be disposed of into a condition of eternal and insupportable misery.* These, I say, are some of the principal things, which religion, both *natural* and *Christian*, proposes to mankind.

And now, before we come to acknowledge the *truth* of them; let us seriously, and in good earnest examine them, and consider, *how good,*

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how expedient, and how suitably to all the ends and uses of human life it is, that there should be such things; how unable society would be to subsist without them; how the whole world would sink into another *chaos* and confusion, did not the awe and belief of these things (or something like them) regulate and controul the exorbitances of mens head-strong and unruly wills. Upon a thorough consideration of all which, I am confident that there is no truly *wise* and *thinking* person, who (could he suppose, that the fore-cited dictates of religion should not prove really true) would not however wish at least that they were so. For allowing, (what experience too sadly demonstrates) that an universal guilt has passed upon all mankind through sin; and supposing withal, that there were no hopes, or terms of pardon held forth to sinners; would not an *universal despair* follow an *universal guilt*? And would not such a *despair* drive the worship of God out of the world? For certain it is, that none would pray to him, serve, or worship him, and much less suffer for him, who despaired to receive any good from him. And on the other side, could sinners have any solid ground to hope for pardon of sin, without an antecedent satisfaction made to the divine justice so infinitely wronged by sin? Or could the honour of that great attribute be
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preserved without such a Compensation? And yet farther, could all the wit and reason of man conceive, how such a satisfaction could be made, had not religion revealed to us a Saviour, who was *both God and man*, and upon that account only fitted and enabled to make it? And after all, could the benefits of this satisfaction be attainable by any, but upon the conditions of repentance, and change of life; would not all piety and holy living be thereby banished from the societies of men? So that we see from hence, that it is religion alone which opposes itself to all the dire consequences, and (like the angel appointed to guard paradise with a flaming sword) stands in the breach against all that despair, violence, and impiety, which would otherwise irresistibly break in upon, and infest mankind in all their concerns, civil and spiritual.

And this one consideration (were there no farther arguments for it, either from *faith* or *philosophy*) is to me an irrefragable proof of the truth of the doctrines delivered by it. For, that a *falsehood* (which, as such, is the defect, the reproach, and the very deformity of nature) should have such generous, such wholesome, and sovereign effects, as to keep the whole world in order, and that a *lye* should be the great bond or ligament which holds all the societies of man-

kind together; keeping them from cutting throats, and tearing one another in pieces, (if religion be not a *truth*, all these salutary, publick benefits must be ascribed to *tricks* and *lies*) would be such an assertion, as, upon all the solid grounds of sense and reason, (to go no farther) ought to be looked upon as unmeasurably absurd and unnatural.

But our Saviour prescribes men an excellent and unfailing method to assure themselves of the truth of his doctrine, *Joh. vii. 17. If any one (says he) will do the will of the Father, he shall know of my doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* If men could but be brought to look upon the *agenda* of Christianity as *suitable*, they would never judge the *creden- da* of it *irrational*. There is a strange intercourse, and mutual corroboration between *faith* and *practice*. For as belief first engages practice, so practice strengthens and confirms belief. The body first imparts heat to the garment, but the garment returns it with advantage to the body. God beams in peculiar evidences and discoveries of the truth, to such as embrace it in their affections, and own it in their actions. There may be, indeed, some plausible, seeming arguments brought against the truth, to assault and shake our belief of it: But they generally prevail, not by their own strength, but by our
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corruption; not by their power to persuade, but by our willingness to be deceived. Whereas, on the contrary, true piety would effectually solve such scruples, and obedience answer all objections. And so I descend now to the

3. And last of the consequences deducible from the doctrine first proposed by us: and this shall be to give some account of the true cause and original of those two great evils, which of late have so disturbed these parts of the world; to wit, *atheism* and *fanaticism*. And,

(1.) For *atheism*. Most sure it is, that no doctrine or opinion can generally gain upon mens minds, but (let it be never so silly and phantastical) it must yet proceed from some real cause; and more particularly, either from the seeming evidence of the thing forcing a belief of itself upon a weak intellect, or from some strange, unaccountable inclination of the will and the affections to such an *hypothesis*. For the first of these, I would fain see some of those cogent, convincing arguments, by which any one will own himself persuaded, that *there is no God*, or that he does not govern the affairs of the world, so as to take a particular cognizance of mens actions, in designing to them a future retribution, according to the nature and quality of them here. It being all one to the world, whether there be no God, or none who governs it.

But

But how pitiful and ridiculous are the grounds, upon which such men pretend to account for the very lowest and commonest *phænomena* of nature, without recurring to a *God* and *Providence*? Such as, either the fortuitous concurrence of infinite little bodies of themselves, and by their own impulse (since no other *nature* or *spirit* is allowed by these men to put them into motion) falling into this curious and admirable system of the universe. According to which notion, the blindest chance must be acknowledged to surpass and outdo the contrivances of the exactest art: A thing which the common sense and notion of mankind must, at the very first hearing, rise up against and explode. But if this romance will not satisfy, then in comes the *eternity of the world*, (the chief and most avowed opinion set up by the *atheists*, to confront and answer all the objections from religion;) and yet after all these high pretences, so great and inextricable are the plunges and absurdities which these principles cast men into, that the belief of a *Being* distinct *from* the world, and *before* it, is not only towards a good life more conducive, but even for the resolution of these problems more philosophical. And I do accordingly here leave that *old, trite, common* argument, (though nevertheless venerable for being so) drawn from a constant series, or chain of
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of causes, leading us up to a *supreme Mover*, (not moved himself, by any thing but himself) a being *simple, immaterial, and incorporeal*: I leave this, I say, to our *high and mighty atheists* to baffle and confute it, and substitute something more rational in the room of it, if they can; and in order thereunto, to *take an eternity* to do it in.

But if this be the case, why then is it made a badge of *wit*, and an argument of *Parts*, for a man to commence *atheist*, and to cast off all belief of providence, all awe and reverence of religion? Assuredly in this matter, mens conviction begins not at their *understandings*, but at their *will*s, or rather at their *brutish appetites*; which being immerfed in the pleasures and sensualities of the world, would by no means, if they could help it, have such a thing as a Deity, or a future estate of souls to trouble them here, or to account with them hereafter. No; such men, we may be sure, dare not look such truths as these in the Face, and therefore they throw them off, and had rather be befooled into a friendly, favourable, and propitious lye; a lye which shall *chuck them under the chin*, and kiss them, and at the same time strike them under the *fifth rib*. To believe that there is no God to judge the world, is hugely suitable to that man's interest, who assuredly knows, that upon such a judgment he

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shall be condemned; and to assert, that there is *no hell*, must needs be a very benign opinion to a person engaged in such actions, as he knows must certainly bring him *thither*. Men are *atheists*, not because they have *better wits* than other men, but because they have *corrupter wills*; nor because they *reason better*, but because *they live worse*.

(2.) The next great evil, which has of late infested the Christian church, and that part of it in our nation, more especially, is *fanaticism*; that is to say, a *pretence to, and profession of, a greater purity in religion, and a more spiritual, perfect way of worshipping Almighty God, than the national established church affords to those in communion with it*. This, I say, was, and is the pretence; but a pretence, so utterly false, and shamefully groundless, that in comparison of the *principle* which makes it, *hypocrisy* may worthily pass for *sincerity*, and *Pharisaism* for the truest and most *refined Christianity*.

But as for those, who own and abet such separations to the infinite disturbance both of church and state, I would fain have them produce those mighty reasons, those invincible arguments which have drawn them from the communion of the church into conventicles, and warranted them to prefer schisms and divisions before Christian unity and conformity: No; this

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is a thing which we may expect long enough, before they will so much as offer at, and much less perform ; there being but little of *argument* to be expected from men professing nothing but *inspiration*, and the impulse of a principle discernible by none but by themselves. And for my own part, I must sincerely declare, that upon the strictest search I have been able to make, I could never yet find, that these men had any other reason or argument to defend themselves and their practices by, but that senseless and impolitic encouragement which has been all along given them. But for all that, men, who *act* by conscience, as well as *pretend* it, will do well to consider, that in human laws and actions, it is not the penalty annexed which makes *the sin*, nor consequently the *withdrawing* it which *takes away the guilt*, but that the fancies of men, as well as the providence of God, may suffer, and even serve to countenance many things in this world, which shall both certainly and severely too be reckoned for in the next.

In the mean time, to give a true, but short account of the proceedings and temper of these separatists. It was nothing but a kind of spiritual pride, which first made them disdain to submit to the discipline, and from thence brought them to despise, and turn their backs upon the established *worship* of our church; the sober,

grave, and primitive plainness of which began to be loathed by such brainfick, fanciful operators, who could please themselves in nothing but novelty, and the ostentation of their own extemporary, senseless effusions; fit to proceed from none, but such as have the gift of *talking in their sleep*, or dreaming while *they are awake*.

And for this cause, no doubt, God in his just and severe judgment delivered them over to their own sanctified and adored nonsense, to confound and lose themselves in an endless maze of error and seduction: So that, as soon as they had broke off from the church, (through the encouragement given them by a company of men, which had overturned all that was settled in the nation) they first ran into *presbyterian classes*, from thence into *independent congregations*. From *independents* they improved into *anabaptists*. From *anabaptists* into *quakers*: From whence being able to advance no farther, they are in a fair way to wheel about to the other extreme of *popery*. A religion and interest the most loudly *decried*, and most effectually *served* by these men, of any other in the world besides.

But whosoever, in the great concerns of his soul, would pitch his foot upon sure ground; let him beware of these whirl-pools, and of turning *round and round*, till he comes to be seized with such a *giddiness*, as shall make him fall finally

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nally and irrecoverably, not from the church only, but even from God himself, and all sense of religion. And therefore, to prevent such a fatal issue of things; let a man in the next place consider, that the way to obtain a settled persuasion of the truth of religion, is to bring an honest, humble, and unbiaſſed mind, open to the embraces of it; and to know withal, that if he *chuses the truth in simplicity*, God will confirm his choice *with certainty and ſtability*.

To which God, the Father of lights, and the fountain of all truth, be rendered and aſcribed, as is moſt due, all praiſe, might, majeſty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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COVETOUSNESS

Proved no less an

Abfurdity in Reason,

T H A N A

Contradiction to RELIGION,

Nor a more unfure

W A Y to R I C H E S,

T H A N

R I C H E S themselves to H A P P I N E S S.

PART I.

COVETOUSNESS

Proved to be an

Abundance in Reason

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Contradiction to Religion

Not a more ungodly

WAY TO RICHES

THAN

Riches themselves to Happiness

PART I

Cot

SERMON X.

Covetousness proved no less an
Absurdity in Reason, than a
Contradiction to Religion,
nor a more unsure Way to
Riches, than Riches them-
selves to Happiness.

LUKE xii. 15.

*And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of
covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in
the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

IN these words our Saviour cautions his dis-
ciples, and the rest of his hearers, against
covetousness: A vice, which by striking in
with some of the most active principles of our
nature, and at the same time perverting them
too, has ever yet been, and will, no doubt, ever
be

be too hard for all the rules and arguments brought against it from bare morality. So that, as a *grammarian* once answered his prince, offering to enter into a dispute with him upon a grammatical point, *that he would by no means dispute with one who had many legions at his command*; so as little success is like to be found in managing a dispute against covetousness, which sways and carries all before it, in the strength of that great queen regent of the world, money; the absolute commanders of fleets and armies, and (which is more) very often of their commanders too. So hard has common experience found it for some to draw their swords heartily, even against an enemy, who has first drawn his purse to them; such an universal influence has this mighty vice: A vice, which, by a kind of amphibious quality, is equally strong by sea and land, and consequently never out of its element; whatsoever place, station, or condition it may be in. From which, and too many the like instances, it will, I fear, prove but too evident, that let philosophers argue, and rhetoricians declaim never so much against this always decried, but yet always practised vice, covetousness will hardly ever lose its reputation and credit in mens minds, (whatsoever it may in their mouths) so long as there shall be such a thing in the world, as money, to hold them fast by.

The

The words contain in them these two general parts :

I. A dehoration or diffuasive from covetousness. *Take heed and beware of covetousness.*

II. A reason enforcing it, and coupling the latter part of the text with the former, by the causal particle [*For*] *for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

If we take the whole complex of the dehoration and the reason of it together, as they are joined in the text, we shall find that they are intended as an answer to a tacit argumentation apt to be formed by the minds of men, in the behalf of *covetousness*, and founded upon these three principles :

1. That it is natural, (and, I may add also, allowable) for every man to endeavour to make his condition in this life, as happy as lawfully he can.

2. That to abound with the good things of this world, seems the direct and ready way to procure this happiness. And,

3. That *covetousness* is the proper and effectual means to acquire to a man this *abundance*.

Upon

Upon these three principles, I say, is built that plea or discourse, with which the heart of every worldling upon the face of the earth, endeavours to satisfy itself of the reasonableness of covetousness. It being impossible, without some pretence of reason, for a rational agent to maintain a quiet mind in any ill course or practice whatsoever: No man ever doing any thing, which, at the time of his doing it, he does not actually judge, that he has *reason to do* the same, whether that judgment be right or wrong, true or false. And therefore, since our Saviour, in the text we are upon, first *supposes*, and then sets himself to confute this plea, by overthrowing some of those sophistical, or sophistically applied principles, upon which it leaned, the particular knowledge of them was regularly to be premised by us, as the basis and ground-work of the whole prosecution of the subject now before us. In which, we shall begin with the first general part of the text; to wit, the *debortation* itself, and so confining our discourse wholly to this at present, we will consider in it these three following particulars:

1. The author of this *debortation*, who was Christ himself; the great *Instructor*, as well as *Saviour* of the world.

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2. The thing he dehorts us from; to wit, the meanest and most sordid of all vices, *covetousness*. And,

3. And *lastly*. The way prescribed by him, as the most sovereign and effectual preservative from it; to wit, a constant guard, and a watchful eye over it. *Take heed*, says he, *and beware of it*; the present danger, and the consequent mischief making the utmost caution against it, no more than sufficient.

All which particulars put together, *viz.* the quality of the *person* dehorting us, the *nature* of the thing he dehorts us from, and the *certainty* of the *remedy* he advises us to, make it disputable, whether we are to take the words of the text, as the absolute *command* of a legislator, or the endearing *counsel* of a friend: I think we have great reason to account them both, and that the text will sufficiently justify the assigning a double ground of the *precept*, where the doubling of that, must needs also double our obligation to the practice; while as a counsel, we ought to follow it; and as a command, we are bound to obey it.

To proceed therefore upon the forementioned particulars; we shall treat of each of them in their order. And,

1. For

1. For the great author of the dehortation or dissuasion here set down, who was Christ himself. *He said unto them, beware of covetousness.* That is, [*He*] emphatically [*He*] with a peculiar significance. For in all persuasions to, or dissuasions from any thing, the arguments enforcing both, must be either founded upon the authority of the person proposing them, or the reason and evidence of the thing proposed. As to the first of which, can any thing in nature be imagined more convincing, than the assertion or word of one, whose infinite knowledge makes it impossible for him to be deceived, and whose infinite goodness makes it equally impossible for him to deceive? The first of which must be abundantly sufficient to oblige our belief, and the other to claim our obedience. But both of them inseparably accompanied the words of our Saviour; who (as the Evangelist tells us) *speaking as one having authority*, and (by the very testimony of his enemies) *as none ever spoke before him*, could not sink below this high character, in his discourses upon any occasion or subject whatsoever; but upon none more eminently did he, or could he shew it, than upon this of covetousness; where nothing but the superlative abilities of the speaker could reach the compass of the

subject

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subject spoken to; nor any thing, but the unblemished virtue of the reprove, put the thing reprov'd out of countenance, or all defence of itself imaginable. For it is innocence which enables eloquence to reprove with power; and guilt attacked flies before the face of him who has none. And therefore, as every rebuke of vice comes, or should come from the preacher's mouth, like a dart or arrow thrown by some mighty hand, which does execution proportionably to the force or impulse it received from that which threw it; so our Saviour's matchless virtue, free from the least tincture of any thing immoral, armed every one of his reproofs with a piercing edge, and an irresistible force: So that truth, in that respect, never came naked out of his mouth, but either cloathed with thunder, or wrapped up in all the powers of perswasion; still his person animated, and gave life and vigour to his expression; all his commands being but the transcript of his own life, and his *sermons* a living paraphrase upon his *practice*; thus, by the strongest way of argumentation, confuting, and *living down* covetousness long before he *preached* against it. For though it is most true, that, in hearing the word, men should consider only the nature of the matter delivered to them, (which, if it contains a duty, will be sure to make good its hold

hold upon them, be the quality of him who delivers it what it will;) yet since also the nature of man is such, that in all addressees to him, the person himself will be still as much considered as his discourse, and perhaps more; and since the circumstances of his condition will always have a mighty, determining influence upon the credibility of his words, we will consider our Saviour discoursing against covetousness under these two qualifications:

(1.) As he was Lord of the universe. And,

(2.) As he was depressed to the lowest estate of poverty.

By the former of which, he possessed *the fulness of the Godhead bodily*; by the latter, he humbled, and (according to the Apostle's phrase) *even emptied himself to the abject estate of a servant*. He who was the *first-born* of the Almighty, and so, by the title of primogeniture, *heir of all things*, and by consequence, had an universal, unlimited claim to all that was great or glorious within the whole compass of nature, yet had so little of this claim in possession, that he tells us, he was in a poorer and more forlorn condition, than the very *foxes of the field, or the fowls of the air*, as to the common accommodations of life. It was a saying in the *Jewish church*, and received with
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an universal reverence, both by the *learned and unlearned*, that *the world was made for the Messiah*. And we Christians hold, *That it was made by him too*. For he was (as the prophet *Esay* styles him) the *Mighty God*, and consequently, the *Creator* of all *that was not God*. The *Son of Abraham* by one nature, and *eternally* before *Abraham* by another. And yet this wonderful Almighty Person, whom the world could not circumscribe, by reason of the divinity and immensity of his Being, had not so much in the same world, as where to *lay his head*, by reason of the meanness of his condition. From all which it follows, that since the quality of the person persuading makes one great part or ingredient in the persuasion, nothing could come more invincibly, by way of argument, against covetousness, than a discourse against it from the mouth of him, who created, governed, and had a rightful title to all things, and yet possessed nothing. And thus much for the first thing to be considered in the dehortation; namely, the person dehorting, who was Christ himself. Pass we now to the

2. Thing to be considered in it, to wit, the thing we are dehorted from, which is covetousness. And here, one would think, it might well be supposed, that there needed no great pains to explain what this is, if we may rati-

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tionally conclude, that men know the things they practise, or (in other words) understand what they do ; yet since the very nearness of the object sometimes hinders the sight of it, and nothing is more usual, than for men to be most of all strangers at home, and to overlook the darling sin lying in their own bosoms, where they think they can never sufficiently hide it, (especially from themselves) I shall endeavour to give some account of the nature of this vice. And that,

(1.) *Negatively*, by shewing what it is not. And,

(2.) *Positively*, by declaring what it is, and wherein it does consist ; for there is often a fallacy on both sides. And,

(1.) For the *negative*. Covetousness is not that prudent forecast, parsimony, and exactness, by which men bound their expences according to the proportion of their fortunes. When the river is shallow, surely it is concerned to keep within its own banks. No man is bound to make himself a beggar, that fools or flatterers may account him generous ; nor to spend his estate to gratify the humour of such, as are like to be the first who shall despise and slight him, when it is spent. If God bestows upon us a blessing, we may be confident, that he looks upon it as worth our keeping. And he only values the
good

good providence of God for giving him an estate, who uses some providence himself in the management of it; and by so doing, puts it into his power to relieve the poverty of the distressed, and to recover a sinking friend, when the circumstances of things shall stamp his liberality with the name of charity and religion. For indeed, he only is in a true sense charitable, who can sacrifice that to duty, which otherwise he knows well enough, both how to prize, and make use of himself; and he alone can be said to love his friend really, who can make his own *convenience* bow to his friend's *necessity*, and thereby shews, that he values his friendship more than any thing that his friend can receive from him. But he, who with a promiscuous undistinguishing profuseness does not so much dispense, as throw away what he has, proclaims himself a fool to all the intelligent world about him; and is utterly ignorant, both of what *he has*, and what he does; till at length having emptied himself of all, he comes to have his *purse* and his *head* both alike.

We never find the scripture commending any prodigal but one, and him too only for his ceasing to be so. Whose courses, if we reflect upon, we shall see his prodigality bringing him from his revelling companions, and his riotous meats, to the swine, and to the trough; and

from imitating their sensuality, by a natural consequence to take up with thier diet too. Prodigality is the devil's steward and purse-bearer, ministring to all sorts of vice; and it is hard, if not impossible, for a prodigal person to be guilty of no other vice, but prodigality. For men generally are prodigal, because they are first intemperate, luxurious or ambitious. And these, we know, are vices too brave and costly to be kept and maintained at an easy rate; they must have large pensions, and be fed with both hands, though the man who feeds them *starves* for his pains. From whence it is evident, that that which only retrenches, and cuts off the supplies of these gaping, boundless appetites, is so far from deserving the ugly name of avarice, that it is a noble instrument of virtue, a step to grace, and a great preparation of nature for religion. In a word, so far as *parsimony* is a part of *prudence*, it can be no part of *covetousness*.

And thus having shewn *negatively*, what the covetousness here condemned by our Saviour is *not*: Let us now shew *positively*, *what it is*, and wherein it does consist. And we shall find, that it consists in these following things.

(1.) An anxious, carking *care* about the things of this world. Such a care, as is expressed in *Matth. vi. 28.* by *taking thought*; the

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Greek word is τὸ περιμνᾶτε, and in the 31st verse, μὴ ἐν περιμνήσητε. A word importing such a *thoughtfulness*, as distracts and (as it were) *divides the mind*, and after it has divided it, unconscionably takes both parts to itself. In short, such a care is here meant, as lies like a kind of *wolf in a man's breast*, perpetually gnawing and corroding it, and is elsewhere expressed by St. Luke xii. 29. by *being of doubtful mind*. As when a man after all his labours, in the sober, rational, and industrious pursuit of his lawful calling, yet distrusts the issues of God's providence for a competent support therein, and dares not cast himself upon that goodness of God, which spreads its fatherly bounty over all, even the least, the lowest, and most contemptible parts of the creation. Such an one is a direct reproach to his great *Lord and Maker*, while he can find in his heart to think him so careful of the very meanest rank of beings, as in the mean time to overlook the wants of his noblest creatures, whom he made to lord it over all the rest, and (as a farther honour) designed themselves for his own peculiar service; but yet so, that he never intended that they should serve even him the Lord of all for nothing. No; the methods of providence are far from being so preposterous, as while it *adorns the lilies, and clothes the very grass of the field*, to leave him *na-*

ked, who was ordered by God and nature to set his feet upon both, and while it feeds the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the land, to suffer him to starve, for whose food both of them were made. Besides that man has a claim also to a promise for his support and sustenance, which none ever missed of, who came up to the conditions of it. And now, can God require an easier and more reasonable homage from the sons of men, than that they should trust him, who neither will, nor can fail them? And withall, rest satisfied, quiet, and composed in their thoughts, while they do so? For surely, the infinite power and goodness of God may much more rationally be depended upon, than a man's own pitiful projects and endeavours, so much subject to chance and disappointment, be the man himself never so skilful, never so laborious. See with what strength of reason our Saviour argues down this solicitous, restless temper of mind, in the fore-mentioned 6th of St. *Matthew*, from this one unanswerable consideration, that if God so carefully and tenderly provides for mankind in their greatest concernments, surely he will not relinquish them in those, where the difficulty of a supply is less, and yet their inability to supply themselves altogether as great. *Is not the life* (says our Saviour) *more than meat, and the body than raiment?* And shall we commit the former

mer to the common mercies of providence, but wholly distrust it for the latter? And instead thereof, fly for succour to our own short, fallible contrivances? When it is certain, that our *thinking* can no more of itself work an alteration in our *civil*, than it can in our *natural* estate; nor can a man independently upon the overruling influence of God's blessing, *care* and *cark* himself one *penny* richer, any more than one *cubit* taller: The same all-disposing power no less marking out the exact bounds and measures of our estates, than determining the just stature of our bodies; and so fixing the bulk and *breadth* of one, as well as the *height* of the other. We vainly think, we have these things at the disposal of *our own wills*, but God will have us know, that they are *solely the result* of *his*. But,

(2.) Covetousness implies in it also, a *rapacity in getting*. When men (as it were) with open mouth fly upon the prey; and catch with that eagerness, as if they could never open their hands wide enough, nor reach them out far enough, to compass the objects of their boundless desires. So that, had they, (as the fable goes of *Briareus*) each of them one hundred hands, they would all of them be employed in *grasping* and gathering, and hardly one of them in *giving* or *laying* out; but

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all in *receiving*, and none in *restoring*; a thing in itself so monstrous, that nothing in nature besides is like it, except it be *death* and the *grave*, the only things I know, which are always robbing and carrying off the spoils of the world, and never making restitution. For otherwise, all the parts of the universe, as they borrow of one another, so they still pay what they borrow, and that by so just and well ballanced an equality, that their payments always keep pace with their receipts. But on the contrary, so great, and so voracious a prodigy is covetousness, that it will not allow a man to set bounds to his *appetites*, though he feels himself stinted in his *capacities*; but impetuously pushes him on to *get* more, while he is at a loss for room to *bestow*, and an heart to enjoy what he has already. This ravenous vultur-like disposition the wise-man expresses, by making *haste to be rich*, *Prov. xxviii. 20.* adding withal, that he who does so, *shall not be innocent*. The words are a *meiosis*, and import much more than they express, as there is great reason they should; for so much of violence is there in the course or practice here declared against, that neither reason nor religion, duty nor danger shall be able to stop such an one in his career, but that he will leap over all mounds and fences, break through right and wrong, and even venture his
neck

neck in pursuit of the design his head and his heart are so set upon. And this, I confess, is *haste with a witness*, but not one degree more, than what is implied in *making haste to be rich*.

For from hence it is, that we see some estates, like *mushrooms*, spring up in a night, and some who are *begging* or *borrowing* at the beginning of the year, ready to be *purchasers* before it comes about. But this is by no means the course or method of nature; the advances of which are still gradual, and scarce discernible in their motions; but only visible in their issue. For no body perceives the grass grow, or the shadow move upon the dial, till after some time and leisure we reflect upon their *progress*. In like manner, usually and naturally, riches, if lawful, rise by degrees, and rather come dropping by small proportions into the honest man's coffers, than pouring in like a torrent or *land-flood*, which never brings so much plenty, where at length it settles, but it does as much mischief all along where it passes.

Upon the whole matter, the *greedy getter* is like the *greedy eater*; it is possible, that by taking in too fast, he may choak or surfeit, but he will hardly nourish and strengthen himself, or serve any of the noble purposes of nature, which rather intends the security of his health, than the gratification of his appetite. And

And in this respect, covetousness, a thing of itself bad enough, is heightened by the conjunction of another every whit as *bad*, which is *impatience*. A quality fudden, eager, and insatiable, which grasps at all, and admits of no delay; scorning to wait God's leisure, and attend humbly and dutifully upon the issues of his wise and just providence. Such persons would have riches make *themselves wings to fly to them*; though one, much wiser than they, has assured us, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* that when *they make themselves wings* they intend to *fly away*.

But certainly, in this business of *growing rich*, poor men (though never so poor) should slack their pace, (how open soever they found the way before them) and (as we may so express it) join something of the *cripple* to the *beggar*, and not think to fly, or run forthwith to a total and immediate change of their condition, but to consider, that both nature and religion love to proceed leisurely and gradually, and still to place a middle state between two extremes. And therefore, when God calls needy, hungry persons to places and opportunities of raising their fortunes, (a thing which of late has happened very often) it concerns them to think seriously of the greatness of the temptation which is before them, and to consider the danger of a *full table* to a person ready to *starve*. But
generally

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generally such, as in this manner step immediately out of *poverty* into *power*, know no bounds, but are infinite and intolerable in their exactions. So that in *Prov. xxviii.*

3. *Solomon* most elegantly compares a *poor man oppressing the poor*, to a *sweeping rain which leaves no food*. A rain which drives and carries off all clean before it; the least finger of a poor oppressor being heavier than the loins of a rich one; for while one is contented to fleece the skin, the other strips the *very bones*. And all this to redeem the time of his former poverty, and at one leap (as it were) to pass from a low and indigent, into a full and magnificent condition. Though, for the most part, the righteous judgment of God overtakes such persons in the issue, and commonly appoints this for their lot, *that estates sudden in the getting, are but short in the continuance*. They rose, (as I shew) like *land floods*, and like them they fell.

3. Covetousness implies in it all sinister and illegal ways of getting. And if we dwell fully upon this, we shall find, that it is not for nothing, that covetousness is called by the apostle, *1 Tim. vi. 10. the root of all evil*. A root as odious for its branches, as the branches for their fruit; a root fed with *dirt* and *dunghills*, and so no wonder, if of as much *foulness*, as *fertility*: There being no kind of vice whatsoever, but

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but covetousness is ready to adopt, and make use of it, so far as it finds it instrumental to its designs; and such is the cognation between all vices, that there is hardly any, but what very often happens to be instrumental, and conducing to others besides itself. It is covetousness which commands in chief, in most of the insurrections and murders, which have infested the world; and most of the perjuries and *pious frauds* which have shamed down religion, and even dissolved society, have been resolved into the commanding dictates of this vice. So that, whatsoever has been pretended, gain has still been the thing aimed at, both in the grosser outrages of an open violence, and the sanctified rogueries of a more refined dissimulation. None ever acted the traitor and the *Judas* expertly, and to the purpose, but still there was a *quid dabitur* behind the curtain. Covetousness has been all along, even in the most villanous contrivances, the principal, though hidden spring of motion; and lying, cheating, hypocritical prayers and fastings, the sure wheels, by which the great work (as they called it) has still gone forward. Nay, so mighty a sway does this pecuniary interest bear even in matters of religion, that *toleration* itself, (as sovereign a virtue as it is said to be of, for preserving order and discipline in the church) yet, without *contribution*,
would

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would hardly be able to support the separate meetings of the dissenting brotherhood; but that, if the people should once grow fullen, and shut up their purses, it is shrewdly to be feared, that the preachers themselves would shut up their conventicles too: At present, 'tis confessed, the trade is quick and gainful, but still, like other trades, not to be carried on without money. Gold is the best cordial to keep the *good-old-cause* in heart: and there is little danger of its *fainting*, and much less of *starving*, with so much of that in its pocket.

The truth is, covetousness is a vice of such a general influence and superintendency over all other vices, that it will serve *its turn*, even by those, which at first view seem most contrary to it. So that it will command votaries to itself, even out of the tribe of *Epicurus*, and make *uncleannefs*, *drunkenness*, and *intemperance* itself minister to its designs; for let a man be but rich and great, and there shall be enough to humour him in his *lusts*, that they may go sharers with him in his *wealth*; enough to drink and sot, and carouse with him, if by *drinking* with him, they may come also to *eat*, and drink, and live *upon him*, and by *creeping* into his bosom, to get into his pocket too; so that we need not go to the cozening, lying, perjured shop-keeper, who will curse himself
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into hell forty times over, to gain two-pence or three-pence in the pound extraordinary, and sits retailing away heaven and salvation for pence and halfpence, and seldom vends any commodity, but he sells his soul with it, like brown paper, into the bargain. I say we need not go to these forlorn wretches, to find where the covetous man dwells, for sometimes we may find him also in a clean contrary disguise, perhaps gallanting it with his ladies; or drinking and roaring, and shaking his elbow in a tavern with some rich young cully by his side; who from his dull, rustick converse, (as some will have it) is newly come to town to see fashions, and know men (forsooth;) and having newly buried his father in the country, to give his estate a more honourable burial in the city.

In short, the covetous person puts on all forms and shapes, runs through all trades and professions, haunts all places, and makes himself expert in the mystery of all vices, that he may the better pay his devotions to his god *Mammon*. And so in a quite different way from that of the blessed apostle, *he becomes all things to all men*, that he may by *any means gain something*; for he cares not much for *gaining persons*, where he can gain nothing else.

4. And lastly, covetousness implies in it a tenaciousness in keeping. Hitherto we have
seen

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seen it filling its bags, and in this property we find it sealing them up. In the former, we have seen how eagerly it can catch; and in this latter, it shews us how fast it can gripe. And we need no other proof of the peculiar baseness of this vice, than this. For as the prime, and more essential property of goodness, is to communicate and diffuse itself; so, in the same degree, that any thing encloses, and shuts up its plenty within itself, in the same it recedes, and falls off from the nature of good. If we cast our eyes over the whole creation, we shall find every part of the universe contributing something or other, either to the help, or ornament of the whole. The great business of providence is to be continually issuing out fresh supplies of the divine bounty to the creature, that lives and subsists like a lamp fed by continual infusions and from the same hand, which first lights and sets it up. So that covetousness is nothing so much, as a grand contradiction to providence, whilst it terminates wholly within itself. The covetous person lives as if the world were made altogether for him, and not he for the world, to take in every thing, and to part with nothing. Charity is accounted no grace with him, nor gratitude any virtue. The cries of the poor never enter into his ears; or if they do, he has always one ear readier to

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let them out, than the other to take them in. In a word, by his rapines and extortions, he is always for making as many poor as he can, but for relieving none, whom he either finds or makes so. So that it is a question, whether his heart be *harder*, or his fist closer. In a word, he is a pest and a monster; greedier than the *sea*, and barrenner than the *shoar*: A scandal to religion, and an exception from common humanity; and upon no other account fit to live in this world, but to be made an example of God's justice in the next.

Creditor and *debtor* divide the world, and he who is not one, is certainly the other. But the covetous wretch does not only shut his hand to the poor in point of *relief*, but to others also in point of *debt*. Upon which account, the apostle *James* upbraids the rich men, *Jam. v. 4. Behold*, says he, *the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which of you is kept back, crieth*. These, it seems, being the men who allow neither servants nor workmen any other wages, than (as the saying is) their *labour for their pains*. Men, generally as the world goes, are too powerful to be just, and too rich to pay their debts. For whatsoever they can borrow, they look upon as lawful prize, and extremely despise and laugh at the folly of restitution. But well it is for the poor orphan and
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the oppressed, that there is a court above, where the cause of both will be infallibly recognized, and such devourers be forced to disgorge the *widows houses* they had swallowed, and the most righteous judge be sure to pay those their due, who would never pay any else theirs.

The truth is, the covetous person is so bad a pay-master, that he lives and dies as much a debtor to himself, as to any one else: His own *back* and *belly* having an action of debt against him; while he pines, and pinches, and denies himself, not only in the accommodations, but also in the very necessities of nature; with the greatest nonsense imaginable, living a *beggar*, that he may die *rich*, and leave behind him a mass of money, valuable upon no other account in the world, but as it is an instrument to command and procure to a man those conveniencies of life, which such an one voluntarily, and by full choice deprives himself of.

Nor does this vice stop here, but, as I verily believe, one great reason which keeps some persons from the blessed sacrament, may be resolved into their covetousness. For God, in that duty, certainly calls for a remembrance of the poor, and therefore there must be something offered, as well as received by the worthy

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communicant. But this the covetous wretch likes not, who perhaps could brook the duty well enough, were it an ordinance only for receiving and taking in; but since it requires also something to be parted with, he flies from the altar, as if he were to be sacrificed upon it; and so, turning his back upon his Saviour, chooses rather to forget all the benefits of his precious death and passion, than to cast in his portion into the poor's treasury; a strange piece of good husbandry certainly, for a man thus to *lose his soul*, only to *save his pelf*.

And thus much for the second thing considerable in the dehoration; namely the thing we are therein dehorted from, which is, that *mean, sordid, and degrading vice of covetousness*. The nature of which I have been endeavouring to make out both *negatively*, by shewing what it is not; and *positively*, by shewing what it is, and wherein it consists. I proceed now to the

III. And last thing to be considered in the dehoration. Which is, the way and means whereby we are taught to avoid the thing we are thus dehorted from. And that is, by using a constant care and vigilance against it. *Take heed, and beware of covetousness*. Concerning which, we must observe, that as every thing to be avoided, is properly an evil or mischief;
so

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so such an evil, as is to be avoided by a singular, and more than ordinary caution, is always attended with one or both of these two qualifications:

1. An exceeding aptness to prevail upon us.

2. An equal difficulty in removing it, when it has once prevailed. In both which respects, we are eminently cautioned against covetousness. And first, we shall find, that it is a vice marvelously apt to prevail upon and insinuate into the heart of man; and that upon these three accounts.

(1.) The near resemblance which it often bears to virtue.

(2.) The plausibility of its pleas and pretences. And,

(3.) The great reputation which riches generally give men in the world, by whatsoever ways or means they were gotten. And,

(1.) It insinuates, by the near resemblance it bears to virtue. Virtue and vice dwell upon the confines of each other; always most distant in their natures, though the same too often in appearance; like the borderers of two kingdoms or countries, the greatest *enemies*, and yet the nearest *neighbours*. So that it must needs require no small accuracy of judgment (and such as few are masters of) to state the just limits of both, and a man must go *nearer*,

than the covetous person himself, to hit the dividing point, and to shew exactly where the virtue ends, and the vice begins. A small accident or circumstance often changing the whole quality of the action, and of lawful or indifferent, rendring it culpable and unlawful. Covetousness is confessedly a vice, could we but know where to find it. But when it is confronted with *prodigality*, it is so apt to take shelter under the name and shew of good *husbandry*, that it is hard to discern the reality from the pretence, and to represent nature in its true shape. *Parfimony* and *saving*, determined by due circumstances, are, questionless, the dictates of right reason, and so far not allowable only, but commendable also. For surely there can be no immorality in *sparing*, where there is no law whatsoever, that obliges a man to *spend*. It is the common and received voice of the world, that nothing can be more laudably got, than that which is lawfully saved. *Saving* (as I hinted before) being nothing else, but a due valuation of the favours of providence, and a fencing against one of the greatest of miseries, *poverty*; which, *Solomon* tells us, *comes like an armed man* upon the lavish and the prodigal; and when it comes, is of itself a curse, and a temptation, and too often makes a man as wicked, as he is poor. But such is the frail-

ty of human nature, and its great proneness to vice, that under the mask or lawful parsimony, that *amor sceleratus habendi*, covetousness insensibly steals upon, and gets possession of the soul, and the man is entangled and enslaved, and brought under the power of an ill habit, before he is so much as alarmed with its first approaches; and ready to be carried off by the plague, or some mortal *distemper*, before he is aware of the infection. But,

(2.) Covetousness is apt to insinuate also, by the plausibility of its pleas. Amongst which, none more usual and general, than the necessity of *providing for children and posterity*; whom (all will grant) parents should not be instrumental to bring into the world, only to see them starve when they are here. Nor are just the necessities of a bare subsistence to be the only measure of their care for them; but some consideration is to be had also of the quality and condition to which they were born, and consequently were brought into not by *choice*, but by *descent*. For it seems not * suitable to the

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* But much different was the advice of a certain lawyer, a great confident of the rebels in the time of their reign; who, upon a consult held amongst them, how to dispose of the Duke of Gloucester, youngest son of King Charles the first, then in their hands; with great gravity (forsooth) declared it for his opinion, *that they should bind him out to some good trade, that so he might eat his bread honestly.* These were his words, and very
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common, and most impartial judgment of mankind, *that one* of a noble family and extraction should be put to hedging and ditching, and be forced to support himself with the labour of his hands, and the *sweat* of his brow. 'Tis hard measure to be nobly born, and basely endowed; to wear a title above one's circumstances, and so serve only as a foil to an elder brother. But now, by such provisions for posterity, the reason and measure of mens gains, from personal, is like to grow infinite and perpetual; and yet no charge of covetousness seems here able to take place; it being impossible for a man to be *covetous* in that, in which no getting can be superfluous. The first plea of avarice therefore is, *provision for posterity*.

But then, if a man's condition be such, that all his cares are to terminate in his own person, and that he has neither sons nor daughters to lay up for, but that his whole family lives and dies with him, and one *grave* is to receive them all, why then covetousness will urge to him the necessity of hoarding up against old age, against the days of weakness and infirmity, when the strength of his body, and the

extraordinary ones they were indeed. Nevertheless, they could not hinder him from being made a judge in the reign of King *Charles* the second. A practice not unusual in the courts of some princes, to encourage and prefer their mortal enemies before their truest friends.

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vigour of his mind shall fail him, and when the world shall measure out their friendships and respects to him, only according to the dimensions of his purse. Upon which account, one would think, that all a man's gettings and hoardings up, during his youth, ought to pass but for charity and compassion to his old age; which must either live and subsist upon the stock of former acquisitions, or expect all that misery, which *want*, added to *weakness*, can bring upon it. The sight of an old man, poor and destitute, crazy and scorned, unable to help himself, or to *buy* the help of others, is a shrewd argument to recommend covetousness to one, even in his greenest years, and to make the very youngest and jolliest sparks, in their most flourishing age, look about them. It having been the observation and judgment of some, who have wanted neither wisdom nor experience, *that an old man has no friend but his money*. And I heartily wish I could confute the observation.

But the like, and no less plausible a plea will this vice also put in for providing against *times of persecution*, or publick calamity; calling to a man's mind all the hardships of a civil war, all the plunders and rapines, when nothing was safe above ground; but a man was forced to *bury his bags*, to keep himself *alive*. And

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therefore, though, at present, there should be peace, and all about us calm and quiet; yet who knows how soon a storm may arise, and the spirit of *rebellion* and *fanaticism* put it into mens heads once more to raise armies to plunder, and cut throats *in the Lord*? and then, believe it, when the *great work* shall be thus carrying on, and we shall see our friends and our neighbours *reformed* out of house and home as formerly, it would be found worth while to have secured a friendly penny in a corner, which may bid us eat, when we should otherwise starve, and speak comfort to us, when our friends will not so much as know us.

With these, and such like reasonings fallaciously applied, will covetousness persuade a man, both of the necessity and lawfulness of his raising heap upon heap, and joining house to house, and putting no bounds to his gains, when his hand is once in. And it must be confessed, that there is some shew of reason for what has been alledged; but when again, we shall consider, that the forementioned cases are all but future contingencies, which are by no means to be the rule of mens actions, our duty is only to look to the precept, and the obligation of it, which is plain and present, and may be easily known; and for the rest, to commit ourselves to the good providence of God. For

while we are solicitously providing against the miseries of age and persecution, how do we know, whether we shall ever live to be old? or to see the calamity of our country? or the persecution of our persons? But however, if God shall see it for his honour to try and humble us with the miseries of any of these conditions, it is not all our art and labour, all our parsimony and providence, which can prevent them. And therefore, how plausible soever the pleas of covetousness may seem, they are far from being rational. But,

3. And *lastly*; Covetousness is apt to prevail upon the minds of men, by reason of the *reputation* which riches generally give men in the world, by whatsoever ways or means they were gotten. It is a very great, though sad and scandalous truth, that rich men are at the very same time esteemed and honoured, while the ways, by which they grew rich, are abhorred and detested: For how is griping and avarice exclaimed against? How is oppression branded all the world over! All mankind seem agreed to run them down; and yet, what addresses are made, what respects shewn, what high encomiums given to a wealthy miser, to a rich and flourishing oppressor! The lucky effect seems to have atoned for, and sanctified its vile cause; and the basest thing covered with gold,
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lies hid itself, and shines with the lustre of its covering.

Virtue, charity, and generosity, are indeed splendid names, and look bright in sermons and panegyricks, which few regard: But when we come to practice and common life, virtue, if poor, is but a sneaking thing, looked upon disdainfully, and treated coldly; and when charity brings a man to need charity, he must be content with the scraps from the table of the rich miser, or the great oppressor. For no invitations are now made, like that in the Gospel, where messengers are sent with tickets to bring in guests *from the hedges and high-ways*. No, it is not the way in our days to spread tables, or furnish out banquets for the poor and the blind, the hungry and the indigent. For in our times, (to the just shame of the fopsour ancestors, as some call them) full *bellies* are still ofteneft feasted; *and to them who have shall be given, and they shall have more abundantly*. This is the way of the world; be the discourse of it what it will.

And as this is the general practice of the world, so it must needs be the general observation of the world too; for while men reproach vice, and careſs the vicious; upbraid the guilt of an action, but adore its success; they must not think, that all about them are so without eyes,

eyes, or common sense, as not to spy out the prevarication, and to take an estimate of the real value of things and persons, rather by what they do, than by what they talk. Since therefore it is so natural for every one to desire to live with as good esteem and reputation in the world as he can, it is no wonder, if covetousness makes so strong a plea for itself in the hearts of men, by promising them riches, which they find so certain a way to honour and respect. And thus much for the first general reason of the caution, given by our Saviour, against covetousness; namely, *its great aptness to prevail upon, and insinuate into mens minds.*

2. The other general reason is, the exceeding great difficulty of removing it, when it has once prevailed. In which, and the like cases, one would think it argument sufficient to caution any man against a disease, if we can but convince him of the great likelihood of his falling into it; and not only of that, but, in case he should fall into it, of the extreme difficulty (sometimes next to an impossibility) of his recovering, and getting out of it. Both which considerations together, certainly should add something more than ordinary to the caution of every wise man, and make him double his guards against so threatening a mischief. And as for covetousness, we may truly say of it, that it makes
both

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both the *alpha* and *omega* in the devil's alphabet, and that it is the first vice in corrupt nature which moves, and the last which dies. For look upon any infant, and as soon as it can but move an hand, we shall see it reaching out after something or other, which it should not have; and he who does not know it to be the proper and peculiar sin of old age, seems himself to have the dotage of that age upon him, whether he has the years or no. For, who so intent upon the world commonly, as those who are just going out of it? Who so diligent in heaping up wealth, as those who have neither will nor time to spend it?

If we should insist upon the reason of things, nothing seems more a prodigy, than to observe, how catching and griping those are, who are utterly void of all power and capacity of enjoying any of these things which they so eagerly catch at. All which shews, how fast this vice rivets itself into the heart, which it once gets hold of; how it even grows into a part of nature, and scarce ever leaves the man who has been enslaved by it, till he leaves the world.

Now, if we enquire into the reason of the difficult removal of this vice, we shall find, that all those causes, which promoted its first insinuation and entrance into mens affections, contribute also to its settlement and continuance in
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the same; as the same sword which enables to conquer, enables also to reign and rule after the conquest. Covetousness, we shew, prevailed by its likeness and resemblance to virtue, by the plausibility of its pleas, and by the reputation of its effects. All which, as they were so many arguments to the soul, first to admit, and take in the vice, so they are as potent persuasives not to part with it. But the grand reason, I conceive, which ties the knot so fast, that it is hardly to be untied, is this: That covetousness is founded upon that great and predominant principle of nature, which is *self-preservation*. It is indeed an ill-built superstructure, but yet it is raised upon that lawful, and most allowed foundation. The prime and main design of nature, whether in things animate or inanimate, being to preserve or defend itself; which since it cannot do, but by taking in relief and succour from things without, and since this desire is so very eager and transporting, it easily overshoots in the measure of what it takes in, and thereby incurs the sin, and contracts the guilt of covetousness; which is properly an “immoderate desire and pursuit of even the “lawful helps and supports of nature.”

Men dread want, misery, and contempt, and therefore think, they can never be enough provided with the means of keeping off these evils:

vils: So that, if want, misery, and contempt, were not manifestly enemies to, and destructive of the enjoyments of nature; and nature were not infinitely concerned to secure and make good these enjoyments; and riches and plenty were not thought the direct instruments to effect this; there could be no such thing as covetousness in the world. But even money (*the desire of all nations*) would sink in its value, and gold itself lose its weight, though it kept its lustre. For to what rational purpose should men proll and labour for that, without which nature could continue in its full, entire fruition of whatsoever was either needful for its support, or desirable for its pleasure? But it is evident, that men live and act under this persuasion, that unless they have wealth and plenty enough, they shall be needy, miserable, and despised, and that the way to have enough, is to let nothing (if possible) go beside them. So that herein lies the strength of covetousness, that it acts in the strength of nature, that it strikes in with its first and most forcible inclination; which is to secure itself, both in the good it actually has, and against the evil it fears.

In short therefore, to recapitulate the foregoing particulars. If caution and vigilance be ever necessary for the prevention of any evil, it must be of such an one as insinuates itself easi-

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ly, grows upon a man insensibly, and sticks to him immoveably; and in a word, scarce ever loses its hold, where it has once got it. So that a man must be continually watching and fencing against it, or he shall be sure to fall by it.

And thus much for the first general part of the text, to wit, the dehortation from covetousness, expressed in these words, *Take heed, and beware of covetousness.* A vice, which no character can reach the compass, or fully express the baseness of, holding fast all it can get in one hand, and reaching at all it can desire with the other. A vice which may but too significantly be called the * *βελιμία*, or *appetitus caninus* of the soul, perpetually disposing it to a course of alternate craving and swallowing, and swallowing and craving; and which nothing can cure, or put an end to, but that which puts an end to the man himself too. In a word, of so killing a malignity is it, that wheresoever it settles, it may be deservedly said of it, that if it has enriched its thousands, it has damned its ten thousands. An hard saying, I confess; but it is the truth of it which makes it so. And therefore happy, no doubt, is that man, who maturely takes the warning which our Saviour so favourably gives him; and by shunning the

* *Viz.* insatiabilis edendi cupiditas; sive morbus quo laborantes, etiam post cibum esuriunt. *Tusanus.*

contagion of a vice so peculiarly branded and declared against, neither contracts the guilt, nor comes within the number of those, whom God himself in *Psal.* x. 3. expressly tells us *he abhors.*

To which God, (who so graciously warns us here, that he may not condemn us hereafter) be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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PART II.

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S E R M O N XI.

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 Absurdity in Reason, than a
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 selves to Happiness.

LUKE xii. 15.

*And he said unto them, take heed, and beware of
 covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in
 the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

WHEN I entered upon the prosecution of
 these words, I observed in them these
 two general parts:

I. A *debortation*, or dissuasive from covetous-
 ness in these words; *Take heed, and beware of
 covetousness.*

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II. A *reason* enforcing it, and joining the latter part of the text with the former, by the causal particle [*For*] *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

As for the first of these two, *viz.* the *dehortation*, or *dissuasion from covetousness*; I have already dispatched that in a discourse by itself, and so proceed now to the

(2.) General part, to wit, the *reason* enforcing the said *dehortation*, and expressed in these words; *For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

In the foregoing discourse, I shew'd, that these words were an answer of our Saviour, to a tacit argumentation formed in the minds of most men, in the behalf of covetousness; which grounding itself upon that universal principle, *that all men* desire to make their life in this world as happy as they can, proceed to the main conclusion, by these two steps; to wit, that *riches* were the direct and proper means to acquire this *happiness*; and covetousness the proper way to get and obtain *riches*.

The ground of which arguments, namely, *that every man* may design to himself as much happiness in this life, as by all lawful means he can compass, our Saviour allows, and contradicts

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not in the least; as being indeed the first, and most native result of those principles, which every man brings into the world with him. But as for the two consequences drawn from thence; the first of them, *viz. That riches were the direct and proper means to acquire happiness*, our Saviour denies, as *absolutely false*; and the second, *viz. That covetousness is the proper way to obtain riches*, he does by no means allow for *certainly true*; though he does not, I confess, directly set himself to disprove it here; but in the text now before us, insists only upon the falshood of the former consequence, as we, in the following discourse, shall likewise do; though even the latter of these consequences also shall not be passed over in its due place.

Accordingly, our Saviour here makes it the chief, if not the sole business of his present sermon (and that in defiance of the common sentiments of the world) to demonstrate the inability of riches for the attainment of true happiness, and thereby to make good the grand point insisted upon, *viz. That a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. Where, by [*Life*] I suppose, there can be no need of proving *that our Saviour does not here mean [life] barely and physically so taken, and no more*; which is but a poor thing, God knows; but by *life*, according to a metonymy

438 *Avarice as absurd in Reason*, S. II.

of the *subject* for the *adjunct*, understands the *happiness of life* in the very same sense, wherein S. Paul takes this word in 1 *Thess.* ii. 8. Now (says he) *we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* That is, we live with comfort, and a satisfactory enjoyment of ourselves. And conformable to the same, is the way of speaking in the *Latin*, as *istuc est vivere*, and *non est vivere, sed valere vita*. In which, and many the like expressions, *vivere* and *vita* import not the mere physical act of living; but the pleasure, happiness, and accommodations of life; without which, life itself is scarce worthy to be accounted life; but only a power of breathing, and a capacity of being miserable.

Now, that riches, wealth, and abundance, (the things which swell so big in the fancies of men, promising them *mountains*, but producing only a *mouse*) are not, as they persuade themselves, such sure, unfailing causes of that felicity, which the grand desires of their nature so eagerly press after, will appear from these following considerations:

1. That no man, generally speaking, acquires, or takes possession of the riches of this world, but with great toil and labour, and that very frequently even to the utmost fatigue. The first and leading curse, which God pronounced upon mankind in *Adam*, was, that

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in the sweat of his brows he should eat his bread, Gen. iii. 19. And if it be a curse for a man to be forced to toil for his very bread, that is, for the most necessary support of life; how does he heighten and multiply the curse upon himself, who toils for superfluities, and spends his time and strength in hoarding up that, which he has no real need of; and which, it is ten to one, but he may never have any occasion for. For so is all that wealth, which exceeds such a competence, as answers the present occasions and wants of nature. And when God comes to account with us, (let our own measures be what they will) he will consider no more.

Now certain it is, that the general, stated way of gathering riches, must be by *labour and travail*, by serving other mens needs, and prosecuting their business, and thereby doing our own. For there is a general commutation of these two, which circulates, and goes about the world, and governs all the affairs of it; one man's *labour* being the stated price of another man's *money*; that is to say, let my neighbour help me with his art, skill, or strength, and I will help him in proportion with what I possess. And this is the original cause and reason, why riches come not without toil and labour, and a man's exhausting himself to fill

his purse. This, I say, is the original cause; for I know, that, the world being once settled, estates come to be transmitted to many by inheritance; and such need nothing else to render them wealthy, but only to be born into the world. Sometimes also, riches fall into mens hands by favour or fortune; but this is but seldom, and those, who are thus the favourites of providence, make but a small number, in comparison of those, who get what they have by dint of labour, and severe travail. And therefore, (as I said at first) this is the *common, stated way*, which providence allows men to grow rich by.

But now, can any man reconcile temporal happiness to perpetual toil? or can he enjoy any thing truly, who never enjoys his ease? I mean, that lawful ease, which God allows, and nature calls for, upon the vicissitudes of rest and labour. But he, who will be vastly rich, must bid adieu to his rest, and resolve to be a slave, and a drudge all his days. And at last, when his time is spent in heaping up, and the heap is grown big, and calls upon the man to enjoy it, his years of enjoyment are past, and he must quit the world, and die like a fool, only to leave his son, or his heir a rich man; who perhaps will be one of the first, who shall laugh at him for what he left him, and complain,

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plain, if not also curse him, for having left him no more. For such things have happened in the world; and I do not find, that the world much mends upon our hands. But if this be the way of it, (as we see it is) what happiness a man can reap from hence, even upon a temporal account, needs a more than ordinary invention to find out. The truth is, the absurdity of the practice is so very gross, that it seems to carry in it a direct contrariety to those common notions and maxims, *which nature* would govern the actions of mankind by.

2. Men are usually forced to encounter, and pass through very *great dangers*, before they can attain to any considerable degrees of wealth. And no man, surely, can rationally account himself happy in the midst of *danger*. For while he walks upon the very edge and brink of ruin, it is but an equal cast, whether he shall succeed or sink, live or die, in the attempt he makes. He, who (for instance) designs to raise his fortunes by merchandize, (as a great part of the world does) must have all his hopes floating upon the waves, and his riches (the whole support of his heart) entirely at the mercy of things which have no mercy, the *seas* and the *winds*. A sudden storm may beggar him; and who can secure him from a storm in the place of storms? A place, where
whole

442 *Avarice as absurd in Reason*, S. 11.

whole estates are every day swallowed up, and which has thereby made it disputable, whether there are more millions of gold and silver *lodged below the salt waters*, or above them; so that, in the same degree, that any man of sense desires wealth, he must of necessity fear its loss; his *desires* must still measure out his fears; and both of them, with reference to the same objects, must bear proportion to one another; which, in the mean time, must needs make the man really miserable, by being thus held in a continual distraction between two very uneasy passions. Nevertheless, let us after all, suppose that this man of traffick, having passed the best of his days in fears and dangers, comes at length so far to triumph over both, as to bring off a good estate from the mouth of the devouring element, and now thinks to sit down, and solace his old age with the acquisitions of his younger, and more daring years; let him, however, put what is past, and what is present into the same balance, and judge impartially, whether the present enjoyment, which he reaps from the quiet and plenty of this poor remainder of his age, (if he reaps any) can equal those perpetual fears and agonies, which not only anticipated, and brought age upon him before its time, but likewise by a continual racking solicitude of thought, cut him

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him off from all pleasure in the proper days of pleasure, and from those youthful satisfactions, which age must by no means pretend to. *I am this day fourscore years old,* (said the aged and rich *Barzillai*) in 2 Sam. xix. 35. *and can I yet taste what I eat, or what I drink?* But (it seems) as dull as his senses were, he was severely sensible of the truth of what he said. And whosoever lives to *Barzillai's* years, shall not with all *Barzillai's* wealth and greatness (sufficient, as we read, to entertain a king, and his army) be able to procure himself a quicker, and a better relish of what shall be set before him, than *Barzillai* had. For all enjoyment must needs beat an end, where the *powers* of enjoying cease. And if, in the next place, we should pass from the delicacies of fare to the splendor of habit, (another thing which most of the world are so much taken with) what could the purple, and the scarlet, and all the fineries of cloathing avail a man, when the wearer himself was grown *out of fashion*? In a word, every man must be reckoned to have just so much of the world, as he enjoys of it. And the covetous man (we have shewn) *will not*, and the old man *cannot* enjoy it.

But some again (the natural violence of their temper so disposing them) are for advancing, and enriching themselves (if possible) by war: A course certainly, of all others, the most un-

accountable and preposterous. For is it not highly irrational, for a man to sacrifice the *end* to the *means*? To hazard his life for the pursuit of that, which, for the sake and support of life only, can be valuable? Well indeed may the man who has been bred up in, and accustomed to camps, battles, and sieges, *look death and danger boldly in the face*; but yet, let him not think to *look them out of countenance too*; these being evils no doubt, too great for mortality, with but common sense and reason about it, to *defy*. Nay, suppose we likewise, the *man of arms* so fortunate, as, in his time, to have fought himself into an estate, (as several such have done) yet may not, even this also, prove a very slight and contemptible *purchase*, if, as soon as it is made, the man himself should drop out of this world, and so become wholly incapable of taking *possession* of what he had bought with his *life*, but only by his *grave*?

Thus, I say, it often fares with those *soldiers of fortune*, or *field adventurers*, (as we may call them) from whom, if we cast our eye a little farther, upon another sort of men, no less eager after gain and grandeur from their management of state-affairs; shall we find their condition at all more secure? Their happiness more firmly fixed? And less at adventure than that of those of the forementioned tribe? No surely, no less hazards

hazards meet the statesman at the *council-board*, than accost the soldier in the *field*; and one had need be as good a fencer, as the other ought to be a fighter, to defend himself: The oppositions he is to contest with, being altogether as terrible and fatal, though not in the same dress. For he has the changeable will of his prince or superiors, the competition of his equals, and the popular rage of his inferiors, to guard and secure himself against. And he must walk with a wary eye, and a steady foot indeed, who never trips nor stumbles at any of these cross blocks, which, some time or other, will assuredly be cast before him; and it is well if he carries not only his foot, but his head too, so sure, as to fall by neither of them; many wise men, I am sure, have fallen so. For it is not wisdom, but fortune which must protect such an one; and fortune is no man's freehold, either to keep, or to command.

Which being truly his case, I cannot judge that man happy, who is in danger to be ruined every moment, and who can neither bring the causes of his ruin within the reach of his prospect, nor the avoidance of them within the compass of his power; but notwithstanding all his art, wit, and cunning, lies perpetually open to a thousand invisible, and, upon that account, inevitable mischiefs. And thus
I have

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I have shewn the dangers which attend the several ways and passages by which men aspire to wealth and greatness; the things upon which the abused reason of mankind so much doats, and in which it places so much felicity, and finds so little. But,

3. Men are frequently forced to make their way to great possessions, by the commission of great sins, and therefore the happiness of life cannot possibly consist in them. It has been a saying, and a remarkable one it is, *that there is no man very rich, but is either an unjust person himself, or the heir of one or other who was so.* I dare not pronounce so severe a sentence universally: For I question not, but through the good providence of God, some are as innocently, and with as good a conscience rich, as others can be poor: But the general baseness and corruption of mens practices has verified this harsh saying of too many; and it is every day seen, how many serve the *god* of this world, to obtain the *riches* of it. 'Tis true, the full reward of a man's unjust dealing never reaches him in this life; but if he has not sinned away all the sense, tenderness, and apprehensiveness of his conscience, the grudges and regrets of it will be still like *death in the pot*; and give a sad grumbling allay to all his comforts; nor shall his heart ever find any entire, clear, un-
mixed

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mixed content in the wealth he has got, when he shall reflect upon the manner of his getting it; and assure him, that nothing of all that, which he possesses in the world, is yet *paid for*; so that, if the justice of God should exact his soul in payment of that vast score, which his sinful gains have run him into, when this sad debt came once to be cleared off, who then would be the gainer; or what could be *got*, when the soul *was lost*?

One man, perhaps, has been an oppressor, and an extortioner, and waded to all his wealth through the *tears* of widows and orphans. Another with blood and perjury, falsehood and lying, has borne down all before him, and now lords it in the midst of a great estate; and the like may be said of others, who, by other kinds of baseness, have done the same. But now, can any of these thriving miscreants be esteemed, or called happy in such a condition? Is their mind clear, their conscience calm and quiet, and their thoughts generally undisturbed? For there can be no true happiness, unless they are so; forasmuch as all happiness must pass through the mind, and the apprehension. But God has not left himself so without witness, even in the hearts of the most profligate sinners, as to suffer *great guilt*, and *profound peace* to cohabit in the same breast. *Jonah* must

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must not think to disobey, and then to sleep securely, and unmolested. No, the storm will quickly be about his ears, and the terrible remembrancer within will be rubbing up old stories, and breaking in upon his false repose with secret intimations of an impending wrath. So that, if the tempter, at any time, be at one elbow, to induce a man to sin; conscience will not fail to be jogging him at the other, to remind him what he has done, and what he is to expect thereupon. This has been the case of the most prosperous sinners in the world; these remorse and fore-bodings have stuck close to them in the midst of all their plenty, power, and splendor; a sufficient demonstration doubtless, how thin and counterfeit all the joys of these grandees are, in spite of all the flourishes and fine shows they make in the opinion of the foolish world, which sees and gazes upon their glistering outside, but knows not the dismal stings, and secret lashes which they feel within.

And thus much for the first general argument, proving, that true happiness consists not in any earthly abundance, taken from the consideration of those evils, through which men commonly pass into the possession of it. The

2. General argument shall be taken from the consideration of such evils as attend men, when they

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they come to be actually possessed of this abundance. As,

1. Excessive, immoderate cares. The very management of a great estate, is a greater and more perplexing trouble, than any that a poor man can be subject too. Great riches super-induce new necessities; necessities added to those of nature, but accounted much above them; to wit, the necessities of pomp, grandeur, and a suitable port in the world. For he, who is vastly rich, must live like one who is so; and whosoever does that, makes himself thereby a *great host*, and his house a *great inn*; where the noise, the trouble, and the charge is sure to be his, but the enjoyment (if there be any) descends upon the persons entertained by him; nay, and upon the very servants of his family, whose business is only to please their master, and live upon him, while the master's business is to please all that come about him, and sometimes to fence against them too. For a *gainer* by all his costs and charges, by all that he can give or spend, he shall never be. Such being the temper of most men in the world, that though they are never so kindly used, and so generously entertained, yet they are not to be *obliged*; but go away, rather *envying* their entertainer's *greatness*, than *acknowledging* his *generosity*. So that a man, by widening or en-

larging his condition, only affords the malicious world about him so many more handles to lay hold of him by, than it had before. It is indeed impossible, that riches should increase; and that care, with many malign accidents besides, should not increase with them. This is the dark shadow, which still follows those shining bodies. And care is certainly one of the greatest miseries of the mind; the toil, and very day-labour of the soul. And what felicity, what enjoyment can there be in incessant labour? For enjoyment is properly *attractive*, but labour *expensive*. And all pleasure adds, and takes in something to the stores of Nature; while work and labour is still upon the exporting, and the spending hand. Care is a consuming, and a devouring thing, and with a kind of spiteful, as well as craving appetite, preys upon the best and noblest things of a man, and is not to be put off with any of the dainties of his full table: But his thoughts, his natural rest and recreations, are the viands, which his cares feed upon. And is not that wealthy great one, think we, very happy, whose riches shall force him to lie awake, while his very porter is asleep? And whose greatness shall hardly allow him so much as time to eat? Certainly, such an one sustains all the real miseries of want, no less than he who seeks his meat from door to door.

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For he is as much *starved*, who cannot find *when*, as he who cannot find *what to eat*; and he dies as surely, who is pressed to death with heaps of gold and silver, as he who is crushed under an heap of stones or dirt. The malignity, and corroding quality of care is, to all intents and purposes of mischief, the same, be the causes of it never so different. And whether poverty or riches produce the vexation, the impression it makes upon the heart, is alike from both. *They who will be rich*, says St. Paul, *1 Tim. vi. 10. pierce themselves through with many sorrows*; and those (it seems) sorrows not of the lighter, and more transient sort, which give the mind but feeble touches and short visits, and quickly go off again; but they are such, as strike daggers into it; such as enter into the innermost parts and powers of it; and in a word, pierce it *through* and *through*, and draw out the very life and spirit through the wound they make. These are the peculiar and extraordinary *sorrows* which *go before, accompany, and follow* riches: And there is no man, though in never so low a *station*, who sets his heart upon growing rich, but shall, in his proportion, be sure to have his share of them. But then, let us cast our eye upon the highest condition of wealth and abundance, which this world affords; to wit, the royal estate of princes:

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Yet neither can this be truly esteemed an estate of happiness and fruition; but as much advanced, above all other conditions in care and anxiety, as it is in power and dignity. The greatest, and the richest prince can have but the enjoyment of *one man*; but he sustains the united cares and concerns of as many millions, as he commands. The troubles of the whole nation concenter in the throne, and lodge themselves in the royal diadem. So that it may, in effect, be but too truly said of every prince, that he wears *a crown of thorns* together with his *purple robe*, (as the greatest of princes once did) and that his throne is nothing else, but the *seat imperial* of care. But,

2. *The second evil* which attends the possession of riches, is an insatiable desire of getting more, *Eccles. v. 9. He who loves money, shall not be satisfied with it*, says Solomon. And, I believe, it would be no hard matter to assign more instances of *such as riches have made covetous*, than of *such as covetousness has made rich*. Upon which account, a man can never truly enjoy what he actually *has*, through the eager pursuit of what he *has not*; his heart is still running out; still upon the chace of a new game, and so never thinks of using what it has already acquired. And must it not now be one of the greatest miseries, for a man to have a perpetual hunger upon

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on him, and to have his appetite grow fiercer and sharper amidst the very objects and opportunities of satisfaction? Yet so it is usually with men hugely rich. They have, and they covet; riches flow in upon them, and yet riches are the only things they are still looking after. Their desires are answered, and while they are answered they are enlarged; they grow wider and stronger, and bring such a dropsy upon the soul, that the more it takes in, the more it may; just like some drunkards, who even drink themselves athirst, and have no reason in the world for their drinking more, but their having drank too much already.

There cannot be a greater plague, than to be always baited with the importunities of a growing appetite. Beggars are troublesome, even in the streets, as we pass through them; but how much more, when a man shall carry a perpetually clamorous beggar in his own breast, which shall never leave off crying, *give, give*, whether the man has any thing to give or no? Such an one, though never so rich, is like a man with a numerous charge of children, with a great many hungry mouths about him to be fed, and little or nothing to feed them with. For he creates to himself a kind of new nature, by bringing himself under the Power of new necessities and desires. Whereas nature confi-

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dered in itself, and, as true to its own rules, is contented with little, and reason and religion enables us to take up with less, and so adds to its strength, by contracting its appetites and retrenching its occasions.

There is no condition so full and affluent, but content is, and will be a necessary supplement to make a man happy in it; and to compose the mind in the want of something or other, which it would be otherwise hankering after. And if so, how wretched must that man needs be, who is perpetually impoverishing himself by new indigences founded upon new desires, and imaginary emptiness, still disposing him to seek for new reliefs and accessions to that plenty, which is already become too big for consumption, and the just measures of nature; which never finds any *real pleasure*, but in the satisfaction of some *real want*?

But as for the unsatiable miser, whom we are now speaking of, what difference is there between such an one, and a man over head and ears in debt, and dogged by his creditors where-soever he goes? For the miser is as much disquieted, dunned, and called upon by the eagerness of his own desires, as he whose door is haunted and rapped at every hour, by those who come crying after him for what he owes them; both are equally pulled and halled to do
that

that which they are unable to do; for as the poor man cannot satisfy his creditors, so neither can the rich man satisfy his grasping, endless desires. And this is the direct and natural result of increasing wealth. Riches are still made the reason of riches; and men get only, that they may *lay up*, and lay up only, that they may *keep*. Upon which principle, it is evident, that the covetous person is always thinking himself *in want*, and consequently as far from any true relish of happiness, as he must needs be, who apprehends himself under that condition, which of all things in the world *he most abhors*.

3. The third evil which attends men, in the possession of the abundance of this world, is, that such a condition is the *proper scene of temptation*. It brings men, as the Apostle tells us, in the forecited 1 Tim. vi. 9. *into a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, and such as drown men in destruction and perdition*. So hard it is for the corruption of man's nature not to work, where it has such plenty of materials to work upon. For who so strongly tempted to pride, as he who has riches to bear it out? who so prone to be luxurious, as he who has wealth to feed and maintain his luxury? Who so apt to besot himself with idleness, as he who can command, and have all things, and yet do nothing? It is a miracle almost for a rich man not to be over-run with vice, having both

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such strong inclinations to it from *within*, and such inducements and opportunities to it from *without*. To be rich in *money*, and *rich in good works* too, rarely concur. All opportunity and power to gratify a man's vicious humour, is a shrewd temptation to him actually to do so. Where riches are at hand, all impediments and obstructions vanish. For what is it, which gold will not command? What sin so costly, which the rich man may not venture upon, if he can but stretch his *conscience* to the measures of his *purse*? Such an one's condition places him in the very high-way to damnation? while it surrounds, and besets him with all those allurements, which are apt to beguile and ruin souls. And a man must have a rare mastery of himself, and controul of his affections, to be able to look a pleasing vice in the face, and to despise it, when the affluence of his fortune shall give him his free choice of all those pleasures, which his nature so mightily importunes him to. But it is scarce an age, that can give us an instance of such an impregnable and resolved abstemiousness under such circumstances; men are generally treacherous, and false to themselves, and their greatest concerns; wretchedly weak and pliant to their innate viciousness, when it is once called forth, and enflamed by the provocations it receives from the wealth and plenty they wallow in.

Whence

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Whence it is, that many hopeful young men debauch and drown themselves in sensuality, and come at length to lose both their souls, and their wits too; and that, only because it was their lot to be born to great estates, and thereby to have money enough to keep pace with their lewd desires, and to answer them with full and constant supplies; while others, in the mean time, whose nature and temper was, perhaps, not at all better than their own, have took to the ways of industry and virtue, and so made themselves both useful in their lives, and happy after their death, only through the mercy of providence, stinting their worldly fortunes, and thereby cutting off those incentives of lust, and instruments of sin, which have inveigled and abused others, and brought them headlong to destruction. Certain it is, that a rich man must use great caution to keep himself clear from sin, and add greater strength and force to his resolutions to make himself virtuous, than men in other circumstances need to do: For he has greater temptations to break through, than they have; and consequently, cannot make good his ground at the same rate of vigilance and activity, which persons less assaulted may. Which being his case, it is hard to conceive, what happiness there can be in that condition, which renders virtue, a thing in it-
self

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self so difficult, infinitely more difficult; which turns the *strait gate* into a *needle's eye*, and makes hell itself, which is so broad already, ten times broader than it was before.

4. The fourth evil attending men, in the possession of this earthly abundance, is, the malice and envy of the world round about them. The bounties of providence are generally looked upon with an evil eye, by such as are not the objects of them themselves. And some have no other fault, so much as objected against them, to provoke the invectives and satyrs of foul mouths, but only that they thrive in the world, that they have fair estates, and so need not herd themselves with the rabble, nor lick the spittle of great ones, nor own any other dependences, but upon God in the first place, and upon themselves in the next. So long as malice and envy lodge in the breasts of mankind, it is impossible for a man in a wealthy, flourishing condition, not to feel the stroke of mens tongues, and of their hands too, if occasion serves. The fuller the branches are, the more shall the tree be flung at. What impeached *Naboth* of treason and blasphemy, but his spacious vineyard, too convenient for his potent neighbour, to let the owner enjoy it long? What made the King of *Babylon* invade *Judæa*, but the royal stores and treasures displayed

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played and boasted of by *Hezekiah* before the *Chaldean* ambaffadors, to the fupplanting of his crown, and the miserable captivity of his pofterity? In *Sylla's* bloody profeription, matters came to that paff in *Rome*, that if a man had but a fair garden, a rich jewel, or but a ring of value, it was enough to get his name pofted up in the cut-throat roll, and to coft him his life, for having any thing worth the taking from him. Seldom do armies invade poor day-labouring countries; they are not the thin weather-beaten cottages, but the opulent trading cities, which invite the plunderer; and war goes on but heavily, where there is no profpect of fpoil to enliven it. So that, whether we look upon focieties, or fingle perfons, ftill we fhall find them both owing this to their great wealth, that it gives them the honour to be thought worth ruining, and a fit prey for thofe who fhall think they deferve that wealth better than themfelves; as, they may be fure, enough will.

And thus much for the fecond general Argument, proving, *that true happinefs confifts not in any earthly abundance*, taken from the confideration of thofe evils, which, for the moft part, if not always, attend, and go along with it. But,

3. The third general argument for the proof of the same, shall be taken from the utter inability of the greatest earthly riches, to remove those things which chiefly render men miserable: And this will appear to us, if we reflect,

1. Upon what affects the mind. And,
2. And what affects the body. And here,

1. First for that which affects a man's spiritual part, his mind. Suppose that to be grieved, and labouring under the most pressing and unsupportable of all griefs, *trouble of conscience*: And what can riches, power, or honour contribute to its removal? Can they pluck out any of those poisoned arrows, which the apprehension of God's wrath fastens in the soul? Can they heal the wounds, and assuage the anguish of a conscience groaning, and even gasping under the terrors of the Almighty? Nay, let the grief arise but from a temporal cause, as suppose the death and loss of a dear friend, the diminution of a man's honour, or the like; and what miserable comforters in any of these cases are the heaviest bags, and the fullest coffers? The pleasure arising from all other temporal enjoyments cannot equal the smart, which the mind endures from the loss of any one of them. For what pleasure did *David* find in his crown and scepter, and all his royal greatness, when his

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his dear (though sottishly beloved) *Absalom* was torn from him: What enjoyment had *Haman* in all his court-preferments, his grandeur and interest in his royal master's affection, when *Mordecai*, his most maligned enemy, refused to cringe to him in the gate? Why just none at all, if we may take his word for it, who should know his own mind best. For in *Esth.* v. 11, 12. when he had reckoned up all his wealth, glory, and greatness, together with his numerous off-spring, designed (as he thought) to inherit all of it; he adds in the 13th verse, (and a remarkable passage it is) *yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting in the King's gate.* The pride of his swelling heart, and the envy of his malicious eye, racked and tormented him more than all that the splendor and magnificence of the *Persian* court (the greatest then in the world) could delight or gratify him with. And now, what poor contributors must these earthly enjoyments needs be to a man's real happiness, when a hundred pleasures shall not be able to counter-balance one sorrow? But that one cross accident shall sour the whole mass of a man's comforts; and the mind shall as really droop, languish, and pine away, while a man is surrounded with vast treasures, rich attendance, and a plentiful table, as if he had neither where

to lay his head, nor where-withall to fill his mouth. For all the delight he does, or can reap from his other comforts, serves only to quicken and increase the sense of that calamity, which has actually took possession of him. But in the

2. Place, let us consider the miseries which affect the body, and we shall find, that the greatest pleasures arising from any degree of wealth or plenty whatsoever, is so far from reaching the soul, that it scarce pierces the skin. What would a man give to purchase a release, nay, but, a small respite from the extreme pains of the gout or stone; and yet, if he could fee his physician with both the *Indies*, neither art nor money can redeem, or but relieve him from his misery. No man feels the pangs or tortures of his present distemper (be it what it will) at all the less for his being rich. His riches indeed may have occasioned, but they cannot allay them. No man's fever burns the gentler, for his drinking his juleps in a golden cup. Nor could *Alexander* himself, at the price of all his conquests, antidote, or recall the poisonous draught, when it had once got into his veins. When God shall think fit to cast a man upon his bed of pain or sickness, let him summon about him his thousands, and his ten thousands, his lands and his rich manors,

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manors, and see whether he can bribe, or buy off, or so much as compound with his distemper, but for one night's rest. No; the sick bed is so like the grave, which it leads to, that it uses rich and poor, prince and peasant all alike. Pain has no respect of persons, but strikes all with an equal, and an impartial stroke.

We know how God reprov'd the foolish wordling, (as our Saviour tells us) in *Luke xii. 20.* *Thou fool, (says he) this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all those things be, which thou hast boarded up?* But we may bring the sentence here pronounced much lower, and yet render it dreadful enough, even within the compass of this life; and say, *Thou fool, this night, this day shall thy health and strength be taken from thee;* and then, what pleasure, what enjoyment will all thy possessions afford thee? God may smite thee with some lingering, dispiriting disease, which shall crack the strength of thy sinews, and suck the marrow out of thy bones; and then, what pleasure can it be to wrap thy living skeleton in purple, and rot alive in cloth of gold? when thy cloaths shall serve only to upbraid the usefulness of thy limbs, and thy rich fare stand before thee only to reproach and tantalize the weakness of thy stomach; while thy consumption

tion is every day dressing thee up for the worms? All which, I think, is a sufficient demonstration, that *plenty* and *enjoyment* are not the same thing. They are the inward strength and sufficiency of a man's faculties, which must render him a subject capable of tasting or enjoying the good things which providence bestows upon him. But as it is God only who *creates*; so it is he alone who must *support* and *preserve* these; and when he withdraws his hand, and lets nature sink into its original weakness and insufficiency, all a man's delights fail him, all his enjoyments vanish. For no man (to be sure) can *enjoy himself* any longer, than he can be said *to be himself*.

But now, if riches are thus wholly unable of themselves to effect any thing towards a man's relief, under a corporal malady, how can they, as such, deserve the name of felicity? For what are they good for? What can they do for him? The man is sick, and his disease torments, and death threatens him; and can they either remove the one, or keep off the other? Nothing less. But it will be answered perhaps, that when a man is well and healthy, they may serve him for many conveniences of life: They may do so, I confess; but then, this also is as true, that he, who is *bealtby* and *well*, may enjoy all the necessary satis-

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satisfactions which his nature calls for, though he has no other riches in the world, but those poor incomes, which he daily earns with the labour of his hands, or the working of his brain. So that the sum and result of all their efficacy towards a man's happiness, amounts but to this; that riches may indeed minister something to the making of that person *happy*, who is in such a condition of *health and strength*, as may enable him, if he pleases, to make himself *happy* without them. For a bare competence, and that a very slender one too, will answer all the needs of nature; and where a competence is *sufficient*, an *abundance*, I am sure, cannot be *necessary*. And this introduces the

4. And last argument to prove, that *man's happiness consists not in any earthly abundance*, taken from this consideration; that the greatest happiness, which this life is capable of, may be, and actually has been, enjoyed without this *abundance*; and consequently, cannot depend upon it. Now, that, undoubtedly, is the chief happiness of life; for the attainment of which, all other things are designed but as the means, and subservient instruments. And what else can this be, but the content, quiet and inward satisfaction of a man's mind? For why, or for what other imaginable reason,

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are riches, power, and honour, so much valued by men, but because they promise themselves that content and satisfaction of mind from them, which they fully believe, cannot otherwise be had? This, no doubt, is the inward reasoning of men's minds in the present case. But the experience of thousands (against which all arguments signify nothing) irrefragably evinces the contrary. For was there not a sort of men, whom we read of in the former ages of the world, called *The antient philosophers*, who even while they lived in the world, lived *above it*, and in a manner *without it*; and yet, all the while accounted themselves the happiest men *in it*? And from these, if we pass to the professors and practicers of an higher philosophy, the Apostles and primitive Christians, who ever so overflowed with spiritual joy, as they did? *A joy unspeakable, and full of glory*, as *St. Paul* terms it; a joy not to be forced or ravished from the heart, once possessed of it, as our Saviour himself, the great giver of it, has assured us. Hear *St. Paul* and *Silas* singing out this joy aloud in the dismal prison, where they sat expecting death every moment. And from hence to proceed to the next ages of the church: Who could be fuller of, and more transported with a joyous sense of their condition, than the martyrs of those primitive times, who

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who were so far from any of the accommodations of this world, that their only portion in it, was to live in hunger, nakedness, and want, and stripped of every thing but the bodies, *in* and *through* which they suffered all these afflictions! And as this internal, spiritual comfort, is doubtless the highest that human nature is capable of, and may serve instead of all other, so it descends even to those of the lowest condition. And the poor, labouring peasant, with his coarse fare, and a good conscience to season, and make a feast of it, feeds as cheerfully, and with as much inward satisfaction, as his great landlord, or flourishing neighbour can; there being, for the most part, as much of real enjoyment under the meanest cottage, as within the walls of the stateliest and most magnificent palaces. For does not the honest plowman, whose strength is his whole estate, and his day's work his revenue, carry about him as light an heart, and as clear a breast, as he who commands armies, or can call 35 millions his own? No doubt he does; and his experience (an evidence too great to be borne down) will vouch the same. Accordingly, let any one shew me that enjoyment or pleasure, which men seek for from a vast estate in land or moneys; and I will shew the same or something equal to it, full as high and satisfactory

468 *Avarice as absurd in Reason, S. 1 P.*

in that man, who cannot call one foot of land in the whole world his own, and whose purse never reached beyond the present, nor knew what it was to lay up for the morrow. Many, doubtless, very many such there are, who eat their bread with as much relish, sleep as soundly, think as chearfully, and rejoice as much in their homely dame, and ragged children, together with their high-shoed companions, as those who can command sea and land to their tables, domineer over kingdoms, and set their foot upon the necks of conquered nations.

Content is the gift of heaven; and not the certain effect of any thing upon earth; and it is as easy for providence to convey it without wealth, as with it; being the undeniable prerogative of the first cause, *that whatsoever it does by the mediation of second causes, it can do immediately by itself without them.* The heavens can, and do every day derive water and refreshment upon the earth, without either pipes or conduits; though the weakness of human industry is forced to fly to these little assistances, to compass the same effects. Happiness and comfort stream immediately from God himself, as light issues from the sun, and sometimes looks, and darts itself into the meanest corners, while it forbears to visit the largest, and the noblest rooms. Every man is happy
or

or miserable, as the temper of his mind places him, either directly under, or beside the influences of the divine nature; which enlighten and enliven the disposed mind with secret, ineffable joys, and such as the vicious, or unprepared mind is wholly unacquainted with. *We have nothing, and yet we possess all things*, says the Apostle, in 2 Cor. vi. 10. And can a greater happiness be imagined, than that which gives a man here *all things in possession*, together with a glorious eternity in *reversion*? In a word, it is not *what a man has*, but *what he is*, which must make him happy: And thus, as I have demonstrated the utter insufficiency of riches to make men happy, so to confirm the high reason of our Saviour's dissuative from covetousness, against all objections, or so much as pretences to the contrary; we shall farther observe, *that covetousness is by no means a certain way to procure riches*; and, if neither riches can make a *man happy*, nor covetousness make *him rich*, all pleas for it must needs be torn up by the very roots. And for this, we need not assign any other ground, or cause of the strange and frequent disappointments which covetousness meets with in the ends it drives at; if we consider the nature of the means and instruments which it makes use of for the bringing of these ends about. Such as are *fraud* and

470 *Avarice as absurd in Reason, S. 11.*
force, and schism and sedition, sacrilege and rebellion, all of them practices carrying the curse of God inseparably cleaving to them, and inherent in them. And to shew this in the principal of them, the violation of things sacred, who ever knew any family made rich by sacrilege? Or any robber of the altar, but sooner or later, he fell a just sacrifice to the shrine he robbed? Covetousness may possibly sometimes procure such an one a broad estate for the present, but a long one never. Wealth may brave and flourish it for a while in the front and forepart of his life, but poverty generally brings up the rear. For the justice of God is never in jest, nor does it work by halves in such cases; but whether, by a speedy or lingring execution, by striking or eating through the cursed thing, it will be sure to make good its blow at last. A notable instance of which, we have in the faction which carried all before it in the Grand Rebellion of forty one. Men were then factious and rapacious, because they were first covetous; and none more so, than a pack of incendiaries, who had usurped the name of ministers of the Gospel. For these were the men, who with such rage and vehemence preached down episcopacy and the established government of the church, in hopes to have had a great part (at least) of the revenues of it bestowed upon them

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them for their pains. But, alas, poor tools! they understood not the work they were employed in; for the lay-grandeess, their masters, (who had more *wit with their godliness*) meant no such thing: No, the hunters never intended *that the hounds should eat the hare*; but though their throats, their noise, and their fangs were made use of to run it down, and catch it; yet being once caught, they quickly found that it was to *be meat only for their masters*; and that, whatsoever became of the constitution of the church, effectual care was taken, that the lands of it should go another way. And in good earnest, it would fare but very ill with mankind, if all that the *mouth gapes for*, the *hand* should be able to *grasp*. But thanks be to God, innumerable are the ways which providence has, (some of them visible, and some secret and invisible, but all of them certain) by which it crosses and confounds the greedy wretch, even in his most refined contrivances, and arts of getting; and thereby gives the world a convincing proof, one would think, (if experience could convince men) that it is God, and God alone, who (as *Moses* said to the *Israelites*) *must teach men to get wealth*, as well as enable them to enjoy it. And consequently, that for a man to be *covetous*, and *poor* too, a *miser* and yet a *beggar*, is no such

paradox, as to imply either an inconsistency in the thing itself, or a *contradiction* in the terms.

And now, in the last place, having finished the subject before us, in the several particulars proposed to be discoursed of by us: Let us sum up, and recapitulate, all in a few words, *viz.* That since it is natural for men to design to make their lives as happy as they can; and since they promise themselves this happiness from riches, and thereupon use covetousness, as the surest means to attain these riches; and yet, upon all the foregoing accounts, it is manifest, that neither can covetousness certainly procure riches, nor riches certainly procure a man this happiness; it must follow, by an unavoidable inference, that covetousness must needs be in the same degree *irrational*, in which riches are to this great end *ineffectual*; and consequently, that there is as little *reason for avarice*, as there is *religion in it*. And therefore, that the covetous person (whatsoever he may seem, either in his own, or the world's opinion) is, in truth, neither *rich, reasonable, nor religious*; but chargeable with *all that folly*, and liable to *all that misery*, which is justly the shame and portion of those, *who* (according to those other excellent words of our Saviour, in the 21st verse of this chapter) *lay*
up

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*up treasure for themselves, and are not rich
towards God.*

*To whom (as the sole giver of all happiness,
whether with or without riches) be
render'd and ascribed, as is most due, all
praise, might, majesty, and dominion,
both now and for evermore.*

*No Man ever came to Heaven, whose
Heart was not there before.*

S E R M O N

CHRIST CHURCH, OXON.

up, imagine for themselves, and are not to be

Reverend (or the father) of all happiness.

Mag. Aub. Roux et Dr. J. B. Roux, ban. L. Roux

proposed, might, and dominion

*No Man ever went to Heaven, whose
Heart was not there before.*

A

S E R M O N

Preached at

CHRIST-CHURCH, Oxon,

No Man ever went to Heaven, whose
Heart was not there before.

A

S E R M O N

Preached at

CHRIST CHURCH, OXON.

SERMON XII.

No Man ever went to Heaven, whose Heart was not there before.

MATTH. vi. 21.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

AS man is naturally a creature of great *want and weakness*, so he does as naturally carry a most intimate and inseparable *sense* of that *want and weakness* about him: And because a state of *want* must needs also be a state of *uneasiness*, there is nothing which nature puts a man with so much force and earnestness upon, as to attempt a supply and relief of the *wants which he is so sensible of and so incommoded by*. Insomuch that the whole course of his actings, from first to last, proceeds in this method: First, that every action

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tion which a man does, is in order to his *compassing or obtaining to himself some good thereby.* And secondly, That he endeavours to *compass or obtain this good,* because he *desires it.* And thirdly and lastly, That he *desires it,* because he *wants it;* or at least thinks, that he does so. So that the *first spring,* which sets all the *wheels and faculties* of the soul a going, is, a man's *apprehension of some good wanting* to complete the happiness of his condition.

But, as every *good* is not in the same degree *contributive* to this *happiness,* so neither is it in the same degree *desirable:* And therefore, since *want* (as we have noted) is still the *measure,* as well as *ground of desire;* that which answers all the *wants,* and fills all the *vacuities* of a rational nature, must needs be the *full and ultimate object* of its desires. And this was called by the philosophers, man's *summum bonum;* and here, by our Saviour, *man's treasure;* both expressions importing a *good,* so comprehensively great and equal to all the appetites of nature, that the presence and possession of this alone renders a man happy, and the want or absence of it miserable. Upon which account, though it be impossible, that this *prime or chief good* should admit of any *plurality,* so as to be really more than *one,* yet in regard men take it in by their *apprehensions,* which are so exceedingly
ly

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ly subject to error and deception, even in their highest concerns, and since *error* is various, and indeed *infinite*; hence it is, that this *treasure*, or *summum bonum*, falls under a very great multiplicity: This man proposing to himself one thing, and that man another, and a third something else for *his chief good*; and that, from which alone he expects all that *happiness* and satisfaction, which the condition of his *nature* renders him either capable or desirous of.

Now the words of the text may be considered two ways:

I. As they are an *entire proposition* in themselves. And,

II. As they are an *argument* relating to, and enforcing of a foregoing precept, in the 19th and 20th verses: And accordingly, in the prosecution of them, we shall take in both considerations.

I. And if we take them, as they are an *entire proposition* in themselves, so they offer us these two things:

1. Something supposed, which is, *that every man has something or other, which he accounts his treasure, or chief good.* And,

2. Some-

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2. Something expressly declared, namely, *that whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, or chief good, upon that he places his heart, his whole desires and affections.* And,

1. For the *thing supposed, or implied in the words*; to wit, *that every man has something or other, which he accounts his treasure, or chief good.* The truth and certainty of which proposition will appear founded upon these two things :

(1.) The *activity* of man's mind. And,

(2.) The *method* of his acting. And,

(1.) For the first of these. The mind of man is of that *spirituous, stirring* nature, that it is perpetually at work. Something it is still in pursuit of, either by contemplation or desire : The foundation of which latter, I shew, was want ; and consequently, as man will be always wanting something or other, so he will be always sending forth his desires to hunt after, and bring that thing in which he wants : which is so true, that some men having compassed the greatest and noblest objects of their desires, (so that desire could no longer ascend, as being already at the top) they have betook themselves to inferior and ignoble exercises ; so that amongst the *Roman Emperors*, (then lords of a great part of the world) we find *Nero* at his

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barp, *Domitian* killing flies, and *Commodus* playing the fencer; and all this only to busy themselves some way or other: Nothing being so grievous and tedious to human nature, as perfect idleness.

But now, there is not any thing (though never so mean and trivial) which a man does, but he antecedently designs himself some satisfaction by the doing of it; so that he advances to every action, as to a degree of happiness, as to something, which, according to its measure and proportion, will gratify or please him, and without which, he would be in that degree uneasy and troublesome to himself. The spirit of a man like a flame, being of such an operative, and withall, of such a catching quality, that it is still closing in with some desirable, suitable good, as the food that nourishes, and the subject that supports it; so impossible is it, that desire should wholly lie still. For though the soul had actually all that it could enjoy, yet then desire would run out into the future, and from the present fruition, project the continuance and preservation of its beloved object. In short, what blood is to the body, that desire is to the soul; and as the blood will circulate, while the body lives, so desire will act and range about, while the soul subsists; and nothing but the annihilation of

one can supersede or stop the motion of the other.

And, the truth is, this innate restlessness of desire implanted in the soul of man, is the great engine, by which God would draw it to himself; And if men would be so far true to themselves, and to the most ruling principles of their nature, as to keep desire still upon the advance, till it fixed upon something, which would absolutely and fully satisfy it, it were impossible, but that, in the issue, it should *terminate in God*. But that which makes this great principle so ineffective of any true happiness to *man*, is that *he* does not carry it constantly and directly *forward*, but often suffers it to recur, or turn aside to former false satisfactions; first tasting an object, and then, upon trial, leaving it for its emptiness; and yet afterwards returning to it again, from a vain hope to speed better than he had done before. So that by this means there is a continual *restless circulation* from one empty thing to another. The soul, in this case, being just like a sick man, still altering *his postures*, in order to his ease; though, when he has tried all, he finds no more ease in one, than in another; a certain demonstration, that the soul itself, in the present state of nature, is in a most deplorably *sick*, and *disordered* condition. But,

VI(2.) The

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(2.) The second argument to prove, that every man has something or other, which he accounts his treasure, his peculiar, or chief good, shall be taken from the method of his acting, which still proceeds by a direction of means to one great and last end. For as an infinite progress is exploded in all matters of ratiocination, as absurd and impossible, so it is equally absurd in matters of practice: It being not more necessary to assign, and fix some first principle of discourse, than to state some last end of acting: All a man's practices hanging loose and uncertain, unless they are governed and knit together by the prospect of some certain end.

Now, it is the same thing which sustains these several denominations of last end, chief good, or treasure; all, and every one of them signifying neither more nor less than the grand and ultimate term, to which a rational agent directs all his actions and desires: Every man naturally and necessarily intending some one principal thing; to the acquiring of which, all that he does, thinks, or desires, is subservient, and in which, as in a kind of center, all his actions meet and unite.

For though a man has not continually, and actually the prospect of that end, in every one of his actions, yet he has it habitually and ver-

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tually; forasmuch, as being once designed by him, all his actions tend to, and promote the compassing of it: As it is not necessary, that a *traveller* should have his journey's end in his thoughts, every step that he takes; but it is enough that he first designs it, and in the strength of that design, is by every step carried nearer and nearer to it; every man has some prime, paramount object, which employs his head, and fills his heart, rules his thoughts, and (as it were) lies in his bosom; and is to him above, and instead of all other enjoyments whatsoever. And thus much *for the thing supposed, or implied in the words*, namely, that every man has some peculiarly valued thing, which he accounts *his treasure, or chief good*. But,

2. The other thing to be considered by us, is, *that which is expressly declared in the text*, namely, *that whatsoever a man places his treasure, or his chief good, in, upon that he places his heart also*. Where, according to the language of scripture, the word *heart* compendiously denotes to us, all the *powers and faculties of man's soul*, together with their respective motions and operations. And since the word *treasure* is a metaphorical term for a man's *prime or chief good*, we are to take an account, how a man prosecutes this good, from the analogy

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logy of those actions which he exerts with reference to a *treasure*; and which, I conceive, may be reduced to these four. As,

(1.) A *restless and laborious* endeavour to *acquire and possess* himself of it. There is no man, who heartily, and in good earnest desires *to be rich, or great, or learned*, who can be *idle*. For *desire* is the spring of *diligence*, and the *heart* infallibly sets both *head and hands*, and every thing else on work. Great desire is like a great *fire*, and all difficulties before it are like *stubble*; it will certainly make its way through them, and devour them. From whence it is, that it *generally* proves so *dangerous*, and too often *fatal*, to stand between a *man*, (especially, if in *place and power*) and that which he most *desires*; and many innocent and brave persons have, to their cost, found it so. For *dangers* and *death* itself shall be nothing; *conscience* and *religion* nothing; nay, the very *hopes* of *heaven*, and the *fears* of *hell* shall be accounted as nothing, when a furious, headstrong *desire* shall resolve to break through them all; and, like *Hannibal* in his march, cut through *rocks* and *mountains*, till it either *finds* or *makes* a way to its beloved object. What made *Jacob* think those *seven years of hard service* for *Rachel*, but a few days, as 'tis said in *Gen. xxix. 20.* but the extraordinary and invincible love

which he bore to her? And what makes the trader into foreign countries defy the *winds*, and the *seas*, and hazard the *safety* which he actually has and loves, but the *wealth* which he loves more? All the stupendous instances of *courage*, *patience*, *industry*, and the like, which have so swelled the *volumes of history*, and amused the world, have been but the effects of *great* and victorious *desire*; they are all of them but the instruments of *love*, to compass the things which men have first set their hearts upon: So that when *courage takes the field* for battle, we may be sure, that it is *desire* which *leads it on*; filling the mind with glorious ideas of the *prize* it contends for. All the noble violences done to nature, have been resolvable into this cause; nay, the very restraints of *appetite* have been but the effects of an *appetite* more controuling and predominant.

What is it that a man more *naturally* affects than *society* and *converse*? (it being a kind of multiplication of himself into every person of the company he converses with.) And what, by consequence, can be more uneasy to this *ζῶον Πολιτικόν*, this *sociable creature*, than the dry, pensive retirements of solitude? Nevertheless, when a nobler thing shall have seized his imagination, and his *desires* have took a flight above the first *inclinations* of his nature,
by

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by inspiring him with the diviner love of knowledge, or being serviceable to his country; why then, he can, with delight, retreat into his cell, dwell with himself, and converse with his own thoughts, and, in those higher speculations, forget all his merry meetings and companions; nay, and his very food and rest, and live not only above the pleasures, but almost above the wants of nature too. In Prov. xviii.

1. Solomon tells us, That, through desire, a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all Wisdom. So that it is this mighty thing, desire, which makes a man break off, and sequester himself from all those jollities, those airy, empty diversions, which use to court and win the appetites of vulgar souls. Thus nature (we see) is forced to bend to art; art is the daughter and issue of necessity; and the standard and measure of this necessity is desire; desire, which nothing almost can withstand, or set bounds to; which makes paths over the seas; turns the night into day; and in a word, charges through hunger and poverty, and all those hardships, which human nature is so apt to shrink under, but it will, at length, arrive at the satisfaction which it is in pursuit of.

What high and vast achievements does the Apostle, in the xith of the Hebrews ascribe to

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faith? *As the subduing of kingdoms, stopping the mouths of lions, quenching the violence of fire, out of weakness making men strong, and that to such a degree, as to endure tortures, cruel mockings, scourgings, bonds and imprisonments; nay, and to be stoned, sawn asunder, and slain with the sword.* But how did *faith* do all this? Why, in the strength of *love*; *faith* being properly the eye of the *Soul* to spy out, and represent to it those excellent, amiable things, the *love* and desire of which should be *hotter than fire*, and *stronger than death*; bearing a man through, and above all the terrors of both, for the obtaining of so transcendent a good. In short, *faith* shews the soul its *treasure*; which being once *seen* by it, naturally enflames the affections; and they as naturally engage all the faculties and powers of *soul* and body, in a restless, indefatigable endeavour after it. And thus, in all those heroick instances of *passive fortitude*, *faith* wrought by *love*, and therefore it wrought wonders.

(2.) Whatsoever a man accounts his *treasure*, that he places his whole delight in; it entertains his eye, refreshes his fancy, feeds his thoughts, and, next to his *conscience*, affords him a *continual feast*. It fills, and answers all his capacities of pleasure; and to please, we know, is much more than barely to support. It is the utmost limit of enjoyment; the most refined

part

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part of living; and, in a word, the last and highest thing which nature looks for. It quenches a man's thirst, not only as water, which just keeps nature alive, but as wine, which both sustains and gratifies it too; and adds a pleasure, as well as serves a necessity.

Nothing has so strong and fast an hold upon the nature and mind of man, as that which delights it: For whatsoever a man delights to do, by his good-will he would be always doing: Delight being that which perpetuates the union between the will and the object, and brings them together, by the surest, the most voluntary and constant returns. And from hence, by the way, we may affirm it, as a certain, unfailing truth, *That no man ever was*, or can be considerable in *any art or profession* whatsoever, which he does not take a particular delight in; for that otherwise, he will never heartily and assiduously apply himself to it; nor is it morally possible that he should.

Men, indeed, in the course of this world, are brought to do many things, mere necessity enforcing them, and the want, and weakness of their condition creating that necessity. But still, in all such cases, the man goes one way, and his desires another; for he acts but as a slave under the eye of a severe master; the dread of some greater suffering making him submit

to the disciplines of a less. But unshackle his nature, and turn his desires loose, and then you shall see what he will choose in order to his pleasure, and the free unrestrained enjoyment of himself. An Epicure may be brought to confine himself to his chamber, and take physick (as none generally need it more;) but will he look upon the potion with the same eye with which he uses to see the *wine sparkle in the glass*? Or rejoice in the company of his physician, as much as in that of his *boon companions*? No, the actions of pleasure carry quite differing *signs* and *marks* upon them from such as are *forced*; *marks*, above all the arts of *disimulation*, or the powers of *compulsion*. For so far as any thing *pleases the heart*, it *commands* it; and the *command* is absolute, and the *obedience* chearful.

(3.) Whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, from that he derives the *last support* of his mind in all his troubles. Let an *ambitious* man lose his *friends*, his *health*, or his *estate*; yet, if the darling of his thoughts, his *honour* and his *fame*, continue entire, his *spirit* will still bear up. And let a *voluptuous* man be stripped of his *credit* and *good-name*, his pleasures and sensuality, in the midst of all his *disgrace*, shall relieve him. And lastly, (to name no more) let a *covetous miser* have both *pleasure*

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and *honour* taken from him, yet so long as his *bags* are full, and the *golden heaps* glitter in his eyes, *his heart will be at ease*, and other *losses* shall affect him little; they may possibly raze the *surface*, but they descend not into the *vitals* of his comforts.

The reason of all which is, because an ambitious person values honour, a voluptuous man pleasure, and a covetous wretch wealth, above any other enjoyment in the world: All other things being but tasteless and insipid to them, in comparison of that one, which is the sole *minion* of their fancy, and the idol of their affections. And accordingly, it would be found but a *vain and fruitless attempt*, to go about to move the heart of any of these persons, but by touching upon the proper string that ties and holds it; so that the way to humble, and bring down an ambitious, aspiring man is to disparage him, to expose, and shew his blind-side (which such kind of persons never fail to have;) and the most effectual course to make a covetous man miserable (in the right sense) is to impoverish him: And when such a change of condition once passes upon such persons, they become like men without either life, or spirit, the most pitiful, forlorn, abject creatures under heaven, and full of that complaint of *Micah*, in *Judges xviii. 24.* *Ye have taken away my*
gods,

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gods, and what have I more? For whatsoever a man accounts his chief good, so as to suffer it to engross and take up all his desires, that he makes his god, that he deifies and adores, whether he knows so much or no. For certain it is, that if he would lay out himself never so much in the acts of religion, he could do no more even to God himself, than *love him, trust in him, and rely upon him*, and in a word, *give him his heart*; nor, indeed, does God require any more; for it is a man's all. Take the heart, and you have the man by consequence. Govern the spring, and you command the motion. The whole man (as I may so express it) is but the appendix of his own heart.

(4.) And lastly, whatsoever a man accounts his treasure, for the *preservation of that he will part with all other things, if he cannot enjoy that, and them together*. See a merchant in a storm at sea, and what he values most he will be sure to throw over-board last; every man, when he is exposed to any great and imminent danger, marshals his enjoyments just as *Jacob* did his family, when he was to meet his brother *Esau*, whom he was in such fear of, (*Gen. xxxiii. 2.*) the *hand-maids* and her children he put foremost; *Leah* and their children next; but *Rachel* and her children the hindermost of all.

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all. The reason of which was, because he had set his heart most upon her, and therefore would have her farthest from the danger, if it might be escaped, and last in the suffering, if it proved unvoidable. A father will be rather stripp'd of his estate, than bereaved of his children, and if he cannot keep them all, he will (though with the loss of the rest) redeem the son of his affections.

It is possible indeed, that a man himself may not always perfectly know what he loves most, till some notable trial comes, which shall separate between him, and what he has, and call for all his enjoyments one after another; and then presently his eyes shall be opened, and he shall plainly find, that the garment which fits *nearest to him*, shall by his good-will be last *torn from him*. Bring a man under persecution, and that shall tell him, whether the *peace of his conscience*, or the *security of his fortune*, be the thing which he prefers and values most. That shall tell him, whether he had rather be plundered, or perjured: And whether the guilt of rebellion and sacrilege does not strike a greater horror into him, than all the miseries of an ejection or sequestration. But if, at the *critical time of trial*, such an one shall surrender up his conscience, that he may continue warm in his house, and his *estate*, let him

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him no longer doubt what it is, that is his treasure, and what lies deepest in his heart. For it is that which he can most hardly be without. But his conscience (it seems) he can easily shake hands with; and therefore where-soever he may place his religion, it is certain that he places his happiness somewhere else.

Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life, (commonly speaking;) but let a man love any thing better than his life, and life itself shall be given for it. And the world has seen the experiment; for some have loved their country better than their lives, and accordingly have died for it: And some their parents, some their honour to that degree, as to sacrifice their dearest blood for the preservation of one, and vindication of the other. But still, this is the sure, infallible test of love, that the *measure of its strength* is to be taken by the *fastness of its hold*. Benjamin was apparently dearest to his father, because he was still kept with him, while the rest of his brethren were sent from him. He was to him as the *apple of his eye*; and therefore no wonder, if he could not endure to have him out of it.

And thus I have done with the first consideration of the words; namely, *as they are an entire proposition in themselves*. I come now to the

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H. To wit, *As they are an argument relating to, and enforcing of the foregoing precept in the 19th and 20th verses, Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust do corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust do corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* The force of which argument is founded upon this clear and convincing ratiocination; to wit, that it is infinitely foolish, and below a rational creature to place his heart upon that, which is, by no means, worth the placing of his heart upon; and therefore, since it is undeniably evident, that a man will place his heart upon that, which he makes his treasure; it follows, that he cannot without extreme folly make any thing his treasure, which can neither be secured from rapine, nor preserved from corruption; as it is certain, that nothing in this world can.

This, I say, is the sum and force of our Saviour's argument: In pursuit of which, we are to observe, that there are *two things* which offer themselves to mankind, as rivals for their affections; to wit, *God and the world*: The things of this *present* life, and of the *future*. And the whole strength of our Saviour's discourse bears

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bears upon this supposition, *That it is impossible for a man to fix his heart upon both.* No man can make *religion his business*, and the *world too*: No man can have *two chief goods*. It is indeed more impossible, than to *serve two masters*: Forasmuch as the *heart* is more laid out upon what a man *loves*, than upon what he *serves*. Besides that the soul is but of a stinted operation; and cannot exert its full force and vigour upon two *diverse*, and much less *contrary* objects. For that one of them will be perpetually counter working the other; and so far as the soul inclines to *one*, it must in proportion leave, and go off from the other; so that an *equal adhesion* to them both, implies in it a perfect *contradiction*. For why else should the word of truth so positively tell us, *That if we love the world, the love of the Father is not, cannot be in us?* 1 John ii. 15. Men, I know, think to *join both*, but it is, because they understand *neither*. For a man must first have two *hearts*, and two *souls*, and two *selves*, before he can give an *heart to God*, and an heart to the *world too*. And therefore, Christ does not state this *matter* upon a bare priority of acquisition, as if he had bid men *first lay up treasures for themselves in heaven*, and after that, allowed them, with the same earnestness, to provide themselves *treasures here on earth* likewise,

wife, (and so, by that means successively grasp the full happiness of *both worlds*: for he knew, that the very nature of the thing itself made this *impracticable*, and not to be effected; forasmuch as the acquisition of *either world* would certainly engage and take up the *whole man*, and consequently leave nothing of him to be employed about *acquiring* the other.

Whereupon *Abraham* speaking to the *rich man in the gospel*, who had flourished in his *purple, and fine linen, and fared deliciously every day*, tells him, *that he in his life-time had received his good things.* His they are, called *emphatically*, his by peculiar choice. They were the things he chiefly valued and pitched upon, as the most likely to make him happy; and consequently, having actually enjoyed them, and thereby compassed the utmost of his *desires*, his *happiness* was at an end; he *had his option*; and there was no farther *provision* for him in the other world: Nor indeed was it possible that he should *find* any, where he had *laid up none.* Those words of our Saviour being most *assuredly* true, whether applied to mens endeavours after the things of *this life*, or of *another*: *That verily they have their reward.* That is to say, the *result* and *issue* of their labours will still be *suitable to the end*, which governed and directed them. For *where*

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men sow, there they must expect to reap; it being infinitely absurd to bury their seed in the earth, and to expect a crop in heaven. And accordingly, in the 11th of the Hebrews, we find, that at the same time, the saints of old (there spoken of) declared themselves expectants of a land of promise hereafter; they also declared themselves strangers and pilgrims here. And therefore, let not men mock and deceive themselves, by thinking to compass heaven with one hand, and earth with the other; and so to reign as princes in both. For the wisdom of God has decreed it otherwise; and judged one world enough for one man, though it gives him his choice of two.

It being clear therefore, that a man cannot set his heart both upon God, and the world too, as his treasure, or chief good; let us, in the next place, see which of these two bids highest for this great prize, the heart of man. And since there are but these two, there cannot be a more expedite way to evince, that it belongs to God, than by proving the absurdity of placing it upon the world. And that will appear upon a double account.

1. If we consider the world in comparison with the heart, or mind of man. And,

2. If we consider it absolutely in itself. And,

1. If

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1. If we consider it *in comparison with the heart of man*, we shall find that the *heart* has a superlative worth and excellency above any thing in *this world* besides; and therefore ought by no means to be bestowed, or laid out upon things so vastly inferior to itself. For it is that noble part of man, which God has drawn and imprinted a lively pourtraiture of his own divine nature upon; that part which he has designed for his own peculiar use. For God made the *heart* for no other purpose but that he might dwell in it; giving us understandings able to pierce into, and look through the fairest and most specious offers of the world, together with affections large enough to swallow, and take down all that the whole creation can set before them, and yet remain hungry and unsatisfy'd still. And are such faculties as these (think we) fit to be entertained only with froth and wind, emptiness and delusion? And those things can be no more, which are always promising satisfaction, but never give it. For surely, such low enjoyments, as meat, drink, and cloaths, are not sufficient to satisfy, or make a man happy; and yet all the necessities of the natural life are fully answered by these; and whatsoever, upon that account, is desired more, is but the result of a false appetite founded in

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no real want, but only in fancy and opinion. Nevertheless, there are, I confess, *spiritual wants*, which nothing can satisfy, but what is *supernatural*.

And therefore, the *great* and *good* God, who gave us our very *being*, and so can need nothing, that we either are, or have, yet vouchsafes to solicit, and even court our *affections* and sets no other price upon *heaven, glory, and immortality*, nay, and upon *himself* too, but our *love*; there being nothing truly great and glorious, which a *creature* is capable of enjoying, but God is ready to give it a man in exchange for *his heart*.

How high is *reason*, and how strong is *love*! And surely, God never gave the soul two such *wings*, only that we might *creep* upon the ground, and place our *heart*, and our *foot* upon the same level. Let the *Epicure* therefore, or voluptuous man, from amongst all his *pleasures*, single out *that one*, which he reckons the best, the fullest, and most refined of all the rest: and to offer it to his *reason* and *affections*; and see, whether it can so acquit itself to the searching impartial *judgment* of the *one*, and the unlimited appetite of the *other*; that when he shall have took his utmost fill of it, and gone off from the enjoyment, he shall be able to say,
here

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here have I found all the satisfaction that could be thought of, or imagined; or his *affections* be able to tell him, here have we had all the sweetness that could be wished for, or desired. But, on the contrary, do they not rather depart thirsty and melancholy, and abashed with the present sense of their disappointment, and still casting about for something or other, to piece up the flaws and defects of such broken fruitions? So vast a difference is there in these matters, between *surfeit* and *satisfaction*.

The *heart of man* is intimately conscious to itself of its own worth and prerogative; and therefore, is never put to search for any thing of enjoyment here below, but it does it with a secret regret and disdain, scorn and indignation; like a prince imprisoned, and forced to be ruled and fed by his own subjects; for so it is with that divine being, the *soul*, while depressed by the *body* to a condition so much below itself.

But God sent not man into the world, with such mighty endowments, so much *to enjoy it*, as to have the honour of *desisting* it; and upon a full experience of its woful vanity, *to find cause* in all his thoughts and desires to return and fly back to his Maker; like the

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dove to the ark, when it could rest no where else. But,

2. We are to *consider the world absolutely in itself*; and so we shall find the most valued enjoyments of it embased by these two qualifications: (1.) *That they are perishing.* And, (2.) *That they are out of our power*: One of them expressed by *moths and rust corrupting them*, and the other by *thieves breaking through, and stealing them*. The first representing them, as subject to decay from a principle within; the second, as liable to be forced from us, by a violence from without; and so, upon both accounts utterly unable to make men happy, and consequently, unworthy to take possession of their hearts.

(1.) And first, for *the perishing state and quality* of all these worldly enjoyments: A thing so evident, or rather obvious to common sense and experience, that no man in his right wits can really doubt of it, and yet so universally contradicted by mens practice, that scarce any man seems to believe it. No, though *the Spirit of God in scripture* is as full and home in the character it gives of these things, as experience itself can be; sometimes expressing them by *fashions*, which we know are always changing; and sometimes by *shadows*, which no man can take any hold of; and sometimes by
dreams,

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dreams, which are all mockery and delusion: Thus degrading the most admired grandeurs of the world from realities to bare appearances, and from appearances to mere nothings.

Nor do they fail only, and lose that little worth they have, but they do it also by the vilest and most contemptible things in nature; by *rust* and *cankers*, *moths* and *vermin*, things which grow out of the very subject they destroy, and so make the destruction of it inevitable. And how can any better be expected, when men will rather dig their treasure and comforts from beneath, than fetch them from above? For it is impossible for such *mortals* to put on *immortality*, or for things, in the very nature of them, calculated but for a few days, to last for ever. All sublunary comforts imitate the changeableness, as well as feel the influence of the planet they are under. Time, like a river, carries them all away with a rapid course; they swim above the stream for a while, but are quickly swallowed up, and seen no more. The very monuments men raise to perpetuate *their names*, consume and moulder away themselves, and proclaim their own *mortality* as well as testify that of others. In a word, all these earthly

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funds have *deficiencies* in them, never to be made up.

But now, on the other side, the enjoyments above, and the *treasures* proposed to us by our *Saviour*, are *indefectible* in their nature, and *endless* in their duration. They are still full, fresh, and entire, like the *stars* and *orbs* above, which shine with the same *undiminished* lustre, and move with the same *unwearied* motion, with which they did from the first date of their creation. Nay, the *joys of heaven* will abide, when these *lights of heaven* shall be put out; and when *sun* and *moon*, and *nature* itself shall be discharged their stations, and be employed by providence no more; the *righteous* shall then appear in their full glory; and being fixed in the *divine* presence, enjoy one perpetual and everlasting *day*; a *day* commensurate to the unlimited eternity of God himself; the *great Sun* of righteousness, who is *always rising*, and never sets.

(2.) The other *degrading qualification* of these *worldly enjoyments*, is, that they are out of our power. And surely, that is very unfit for a man to account his *treasure*, which he cannot so much as *call his own*; nor extend his title to, so far as the very next *minute*; as having no command, nor hold of it at all, beyond the present actual possession; and the compass
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of the *present* (all know) is but *one remove* from *nothing*. A *rich man* to day, and a *beggar* to morrow, is neither new, nor wonderful in the experience of the world: For he, who is *rich now*, must ask the rapacity of *thieves*, *pyrates*, and *tyrants*, how long he shall continue so; and rest content to be happy for just so much time, as the pride and violence, the cruelty and avarice of the worst of men shall permit him to be so; a comfortable tenure, doubtless, for a man to hold his chief happiness by.

But now, on the contrary, nothing is so *absolutely* and *essentially* necessary to render any thing a man's *treasure* or *chief good*, as that he have a *property* in it, and a *power* over it; without which, it will be impossible for him to be *sure* of any relief from it, when he shall most *need it*. For how can he be *sure* of that, of which he has no *command*? And how can he *command* that, which a greater force than his own shall lay claim to? For let those puny things, called *law* and *right*, say what they will to the contrary, if the matter comes once to a dispute, all the good things a man has of this world, will be his, who has the *strongest* arm, and the *sharpest* sword, or the corruptest judge on his side. They are the prey of the mighty, and the prize of victorious villany; subject to be torn and ravished from him upon all occasions. Nor

Nor has the providence of God thought it worth while to secure and protect the very best of men in their rights to any enjoyment under heaven; and all this, to *depress* and *vilify* these things in their thoughts; that so they may, every day, find a necessity of placing them *above*, and of bestowing their *pains* upon that, which if they *pursue*, they shall certainly *obtain*; and if they obtain, they shall impreguably *keep*. *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, (says our Saviour) *not as the world giveth, give I unto you*. Why? What was the difference? He tells us in *John* xvi. 22. *Your joy no man taketh from you*. It was such a *joy or peace*, as was to be above the reach of either *fraud* or *force*, *artifice* or *assault*; which can never be said of any earthly enjoyment whatsoever; either as to the *acquisition*, or *possession* of it. God having made no man any promise, that by all his *virtue* and *innocence*, all his *skill* and *industry*, he shall be able to continue in *health*, *wealth*, or *honour*; but that after his utmost endeavour to preserve those desirable things, he may, in the issue, lose them all.

But God has promised and engaged to mankind, that whosoever shall faithfully and constantly *persevere* in the duties of a pious, christian life, shall obtain *an eternal crown of glory*,
and

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and an *inheritance that fadeth not away*. A man cannot, indeed, by all his *piety secure* his estate, but he may *make his calling and election sure*; which is infinitely and unspeakably more valuable, than all the *estates, pleasures, and greatness* of the world. For all these are *without* him, and consequently may be taken from him, and which is yet worse, may do him no good, even while they stay with him. But the *conscience* is a *sure repository* for a man to lodge and preserve his *treasure* in, and the *chest of his own heart* can never be forced open.

Now, the *use* and improvement of the foregoing particulars shall be briefly to convince us of the extreme vanity of most mens pretences to religion. A man's religion is all the claim he has to the felicities of another world: But can we think it possible in nature, for a man to place his *greatest happiness*, where he does not place his *strongest affections*? How little is the other world in most mens *thoughts*, and yet they can have the confidence to pretend it to be the grand object of their *desires*? But why should men, in their greatest concern, be so false to their own experience, and those constant observations which they make of themselves in other matters? For let any man consult, and ask his own heart, whether
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having once fixed his *love* upon any thing or person, his *thoughts* are not always running after it? Strong *love* is a byass upon the *thoughts*; and for a man to *love earnestly*, and not to *think almost continually* of what he loves, is as impossible, as for him to *live*, and not to *breathe*.

But besides this, we have shewn several other *marks* and *properties*, by which men may infallibly judge of the truth and firmness of their love to God, and to religion; as for instance, can they affirm religion to be that, which has got such hold of their hearts, that no *time*, *cost*, or *labour* shall be thought too much to be laid out upon it? Is it the *prize* they run for? Is it the thing they *delight* in? The thing, with which in all their distresses they *support*, and keep up their sinking spirits? And lastly, is it that, which they value to such a degree, as to be willing to part with all the world, rather than lose, or renounce it? These are *great things* I confess, and yet *nothing less* will reach the measures of Christianity.

But the lives of men (unanswerable arguments in this case) are a sad demonstration, how few they are who come up to these terms. Men may, indeed, now and then bestow some scattering thoughts upon their *souls*, and their
future

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future estate, provided they be at full leisure from their *business*, and their *sports*, (which they seldom or never are;) and if, at any time, they should be so, this could amount to no more, than their being religious, when *they have nothing else to do*. Likewise, when the *solemn returns of God's publick worship*, and the *law and custom* of the nation shall call them off from their daily employments to better things, they may perhaps, by a few devout looks and words, put on something of an *holy-day-dress* for the present; which yet, like their *sunday-cloaths*, they are sure to lay aside again for the whole week after. All which, and a great deal more, is far short of making religion a man's business; though yet if it be not so, it is in effect nothing.

And this, men know well enough, when they are to deal in matters of this world, in which, no pains nor importunity shall be thought too great, no attendance too servile, nothing (in a word) too hard to be done or suffered, either to recruit a broken fortune, or to regain a disgusted friend; though after all, should a man chance to recover both, he cannot be sure of keeping either. In like manner, let the trading person suffer any considerable damage in the stock with which he trades; what care, what parsimony, what art
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shall be used to make up the breach, and keep the shop still open? And the reason of all this is, because the man is in earnest in what he does, and accordingly acts as one who is so. Whereas, in mens spiritual affairs, look all the world over, and you shall every day see, that the sins which wound and waste, and make *havock* of the conscience, which *divide* and *cut it off* from God, are committed easily, and passed over lightly, and owned confidently; with a bold front, and a brazen face, able to look the pillory itself out of countenance; nor does any one, almost, think himself so mortally struck, even by the foulest guilt, as to need the balsam of an immediate repentance; and a present suing out of pardon at the throne of grace. And yet, if a man dies, as to his temporal condition, poor and bankrupt, he is not at all the worse; but if he goes out of the world unreconciled to God, it had been good for him, that he had never come into it. For what can it avail a man to pass from misery to misery, and to make one wretched life only a preparative to another?

In fine, this we may with great boldness venture to affirm, that if men would be at half the pains to provide themselves *treasures in heaven*, which they are generally at to get estates here on earth, it were impossible for
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any man to be damned. But when we come to earthly matters, we do; when to heavenly, we only discourse: Heaven has our tongue and talk; but the earth our whole man besides.

Nevertheless, let men rest assured of this, that God has so ordered the great business of their eternal happiness, that their affections must still be the fore-runners of their persons, the constant harbingers appointed by God to go, and take possession of those glorious mansions for them; and consequently, *that no man shall ever come to heaven himself, who has not sent his heart thither before him.* For where this leads the way, the other will be sure to follow.

Now to him, who alone is the great judge of hearts, and rewarder of persons, be render'd and ascribed, as is most due, all praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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